

EDITIONS: MUMBAI*, Pune, Nashik, Konkan, Indore, Bhopal, E-paper

EDIT

TOUGH ROAD AHEAD FOR I.N.D.I.A ALLIANCE

FIVE COS TO FLOAT IPOS THIS WEEK



Together, these companies are estimated to raise at least Rs 4,200 crore



WEATHER

32°C. 26°C.

Sunrise : 07:02 am

Sunset : 06:01 pm

REST IN PEACE (R.I.P.) ARTICLE 370

Abrogation upheld; it was always a temporary clause

President had power to declare Article 370 had ceased to exist

Statehood to be restored; Elections by Sept 2024

Parliament can carve out Union Territory from state





'Article 370 was no Noah's Ark. It was an old, broken ship that would have sunk us in the future. Let's welcome the crossover. Supreme Court has affirmed once again that India is united and true empowerment is in being together. Post-370 future belongs to all. Wishing great success to the people of J&K in their pursuit for peace and prosperity.'

— Shah Faesal said on X.

OUR BUREAU / NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday upheld Centre's decision to scrap Article 370, which accorded a special status to the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The court has further directed the government to hold fresh elections in the territory in Sept 2024.

A five-member bench read out the verdict in the 2019 case challenging the government's power to annul the special law and bifurcate the state. The bench, led by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, held 16 hearings over 35 days and had reserved its verdict in early September.

It was a unanimous verdict with Justices Kishan Kaul and Sanjiv Khanna authoring additional but concurrent notes.

The Constitution bench also comprised Justices S K Kaul, Sanjeev Khanna, B R Gavai and Surya Kant.

In its verdict, the Supreme Court noted that Article 370 was always a temporary provision and that it was meant to provide for the constitutional integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India. Further, it ruled that the Indian President had the power to declare that Article 370 has ceased to exist.

The CJI said Article 370 is a temporary provision, based on a reading of the historical context in which it was invoked.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed the verdict as a "beacon of hope" for a "Naya Jammu Kashmir." In a post on the social media platform X, Modi wrote, "The verdict is not just a legal judgment; it is

a beacon of hope, a promise of a brighter future and a testament to our collective resolve to build a stronger, more united India. #NayaJammuKashmir"

In a post on 'X', home minister Amit Shah wrote: "We welcome the Supreme Court of India's verdict upholding the decision to abolish Article 370."

The court further noted that all provisions of the Indian Constitution can be applied to Jammu and Kashmir.

The Supreme Court went on to direct the Election Commission to conduct elections for the legislative assembly of Jammu and Kashmir by September 30, 2024, and ordered that its statehood should be restored as soon as possible.

CONTD. ON NATION

Prime Minister PARADROPS A Chief Minister

Low-profile Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav to take over from Chouhan

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / BHOPAL

PM Modi has taken the entire political establishment by surprise: In an uncanny move, he has parachuted a little-known erstwhile student leader and Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav (58) into the Hindi heartland as chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, thus bringing the curtains down on stalwart Shivraj Chouhan's marathon innings.

Ironically, a three time MLA from South Ujjain, Yadav's name was proposed by the BJP's central observer ML Khattar – a 'Khatiri' – who was similarly paraded by PM Modi into 'Jatland' Haryana. In keeping with BJP's norms of internal party democracy, acting CM Chouhan proposed Yadav's name which was duly endorsed by the newly elected MLAs.

Yadav represents Ujjain South constituency, which is part of the Malwa North region – a stronghold of the BJP since 2003. "I will spare no effort to complete the job given to me with the blessings and affection of the people and the senior leaders of the party," Yadav said.

CONTD. ON NATION



JUSTICE SEEKS HEALING TOUCH

Truth and Reconciliation Commission proposed by Justice Kaul to address violations of human rights both by state and non-state actors since 80s

ONLINE REPORT

Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul of the Supreme Court, while upholding the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, has recommended the setting up of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address violations of human rights perpetrated in Jammu & Kashmir both by state and non-state actors since the 1980s, reports Bar and Bench.

In a heartfelt epilogue penned after the judgment, Justice Kaul emphasized it is essential to take into account the social context and the historical burden of the region.

"The commission should be set up expeditiously before memory escapes. The exercise should be time-bound. There is already an entire generation of youth that has grown up with the feeling of distrust, and it is to them that we owe the greatest day of

reparation," Justice Kaul added.

He took the view that it is for the government to devise

the manner in which the Commission should be set up and to determine the best way forward for it.

He referred to one such commission set up by South Africa to investigate human rights violations perpetuated by the apartheid regime and further stated that in the past, calls for setting up such commissions were also echoed by different sections of the Kashmir Valley.

CONTD. ON NATION



THE FP BULLETIN

SENSEX TOUCHES 70,000, THEN DIPS

The Sensex surpassed the 70,000 level for the first time in intraday trade on Monday, marking a new all-time high of 70,048.9. Nifty, on the other hand, surpassed 21,000 levels and notched a record high of 21,019.8. However, Sensex lost ground to settle at 69,928.53, after the USFDA released an adverse report on Dr. Reddy's Laboratories. Nifty also lost part of its gains after Pharma stocks fell about 1 per cent.

MP nomination unnerves aspirants in Rajasthan

MANISH GODHA / JAIPUR

The nomination of a non-descript three-time MLA as chief minister of Madhya Pradesh has clearly unnerved the CM 'aspirants' in Rajasthan.

More than half a dozen such names were doing the rounds for the last nine days with the state witnessing both brazen and behind-the-scenes lobbying.

No less than 40 MLAs have met former CM Vasundhara Raje in the last few days. Her meeting with party president J P Nadda in a weekend trip to Delhi had further galvanized her cadres.

However, the caste equations that have been at work in MP and Chhattisgarh may impinge on Rajasthan, too, which is part of BJP's future political template. Apart from Vasundhara, Diya Kumari, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, CP Joshi, Vasundhara Raje and Arjun Ram Meghwal – who is from the scheduled caste category – are believed to be in the race.

CONTD. ON NATION

FBI DIRECTOR, CBI BOSS MEET

FBI Director Christopher Wray met CBI Director Praveen Sood here on Monday where they are understood to have discussed topics related to achieving greater cooperation in cyber-related financial crimes, officials said. The high profile visit is taking place in the backdrop of Washington's allegations about an Indian link to a foiled plot to kill a Sikh separatist on the American soil. India has already constituted a probe team to investigate the allegations.

Chinese 'string of pearls' off Mumbai

DHARMESH THAKKAR / MUMBAI

The Indian defence establishment has flagged a 'recent' worrisome trend – hundreds of Chinese vessels dotting the horizon close to the coast of Mumbai and Gujarat in the Arabian Sea. "Most Chinese vessels are strategically enconced just outside 200 nautical miles where India's exclusive economic zone ends," confirmed a senior naval commander with the Indian Naval Defence Advisory Group to the Free Press Journal.

The vessels started coming in small numbers but now there are as many as one hundred to one hundred fifty vessels. Officials are not forthcoming as to where the vessels could be emanating from. Small vessels cannot travel long distances without refuelling and Karachi, it may be pointed out, is not too far away from the Gujarat coast.

It is quite likely that the presence of the Chinese vessels has been brought to the notice of the agencies concerned. Intel reports have warned that the Chinese fishing vessels also double up as 'mini spy ships' that can gather data ranging from the location of submarines to secret pipelines and activities of Indian ports.

The Western Naval Command is closely monitoring the sudden influx of Chinese vessels in the waters and has deployed several front line warships to address any signs of China upping the ante in grey zones similar to the tactics used in South China Sea.

Maritime experts identified most of the Chinese ships are on the sanctions list of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the US Department of the Treasury and on the watchlist of Greenpeace.

CONTD. ON NATION



Worrying convergence of hundreds of Chinese vessels outside India's exclusive economic zone



TIGHTER VISA RULES IN OZ

Australia on Monday said it would tighten visa rules for international students and low-skilled workers that could halve its migrant intake over the next two years, as the government looks to overhaul what it said was a "broken" migration system, according to Reuters. It aims to slash the annual intake to 250,000 – roughly in line with pre-pandemic levels – by June 2025, adds the BBC.

Mahua moves SC on ouster

OUR BUREAU / NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra on Monday approached the Supreme Court against her expulsion from the Lok Sabha, dubbing Parliament as a "kangaroo court."

Her reaction came when the defamation case she has filed against Jai Dehadrai and Nishikant Dubey in the Delhi high court was taken up for hearing on Monday morning.

The specific allegation against Moitra, for which she has been expelled, is that she shared her Lok Sabha portal login and password details with Dubai-based business Darshan Hiranandani, who in turn uploaded a series of questions critical of the government on her behalf in return for cash and gifts.

The questions were majorly those in which the Hiranandani group had business interests which clashed with those of business tycoon Gautam Adani. The allegation, of what is being called the "cash-for-query" scam by the BJP, was made by Moitra's bete noire,

Nishikant Dubey.

Moitra has consistently held that these allegations are spurious but that she did share her password, which is a common practice amongst MPs as they do not have the time to upload questions on her own.

Opposition parties have come down hard on the Bharatiya Janata Party for the way Parliament was conducted on Friday, when Moitra was expelled.



JNU POSTERS: RS 20,000 FINE

Putting up wall posters and staging dharnas within 100 metres of the academic buildings at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) can lead to a fine of up to Rs 20,000 or expulsion, according to a new manual. The academic buildings of different schools house offices of chairpersons, deans, and other important office-bearers, apart from classrooms and labs. Earlier, protests within 100 metres of the administrative blocks, which house the offices of the Vice-Chancellor, registrar, and proctors, among others, was prohibited as per a HC order.

PAK SC MOVED FOR REOPENING OF THE ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO HANGING

Can 44-year-old Bhutto ghost be laid to rest?

PTI / ISLAMABAD

Pakistan People's Party chairman and ex-foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday approached the Supreme Court for live streaming of proceedings in a case seeking to revisit the controversial death sentence given to the party founder and former premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

In March 1978, a four-member bench of Lahore High Court had given the death sentence to Bhutto, which was later challenged in the Supreme Court.

In a four to three split verdict, a seven-judge apex court bench upheld the sentence during the military regime of the then-army chief Gen Ziaul Haq in March 1979.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was Pakistan's fourth president in December 1971, days after it lost a war to India and its eastern part gained independence and became Bangladesh. Bhutto, the founder of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), was to become the Prime Minister in August 1973. Four years later, he was thrown in jail by his army chief, General Ziaul Haq in a coup in July 1977. Bhutto was accused of orchestrating the shooting of the father of an opposition legislator, Ahmed Raza Kasuri. In a controversial trial, Bhutto was found guilty and awarded a death sentence in March 1978.

A nine-member larger bench of the apex court will commence on Tuesday the long-pending presidential case seeking to revisit the death sentence given to Bhutto.

The case was filed on behalf of the former premier under the Supreme Court's advisory jurisdiction. According to Al Jazeera, the reference was intended to seek the opinion of an 11-member bench of the top court on the legality of the 1979 verdict. However, only six hearings took place, the last in November 2012. The Supreme Court bench changed, and with that, the hearings stopped.

Now with the elections a couple of months away in February 2023, the reference assumes a political significance.



CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ AIRPORT

At 44.6 lakh for Nov, it is the highest traffic number

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International airport has recorded the highest-ever monthly traffic of 44.6 lakh in November 2023 – a growth of 13 per cent – as against 39 lakhs passenger in November 2022. This indicates 109 per cent recovery in passenger traffic compared to the pre-pandemic era.

Mumbai airport handled the highest single day air traffic movement (ATM) of 1032 aircraft on November 11 and the highest single day traffic of 167,132 passengers on November 25, to maintain its role as key hub for air travel.

"The significant growth in passenger traffic can be attributed to the world-class connectivity, introduction of several new domestic and international destinations along with excellent infrastructure and services offered at CSMA," said a CSMA spokesperson.

The highest passenger traffic movement in a single day with more than 1,20,000 domestic passenger movements and 46,000

CONTD. ON NATION



MNS stages rail roko in Lonavala

Maharashtra Navnirmal Sena (MNS) staged a rail roko protest at Lonavala railway station, demanding an increase in long-distance trains and Pune-Lonavala local services. The demonstration aimed to draw attention to the need for improved rail connectivity in the region.



‘Not just on Laxmi Road, walking plazas should be made citywide’

The Free Press Journal caught up with several Pune-kars who had gathered to celebrate Pedestrian Day on Laxmi Road on Monday

ANAND CHAINI / Pune

Pune-kars were treated to a delightful spectacle as the bustling Laxmi Road transformed into a vehicle-free zone on Monday. From 10am until 8pm, vehicle access was restricted along this thoroughfare to observe Pedestrian Day. The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), in collaboration with the city police, traders’ association, and hawkers’ association, united to celebrate Pedestrian Day. Their aim was to raise awareness about pedestrian safety, emphasise pedestrian rights, and sensitise individuals through festive celebrations. The focal point of the day was a vibrant walking plaza stretching from Nagarkar Talim Chowk to Umbrya Ganapati Chowk and on to Garud Ganapati Chowk, hosting a diverse lineup of activities. The event featured a rangoli competition and an exhibition showcasing street designs and road safety initiatives. Throughout the day, there were engaging games, dance performances, singing sessions, and street plays. The Free Press Journal caught up with several Pune-kars who had gathered to enjoy the festivities on

Laxmi Road. They said that such initiatives should not be confined solely to Laxmi Road but should extend citywide. “This walking plaza should be organised twice a year to reduce pollution for a day and give the roads some rest,” suggested Neelima More. “Expanding this initiative beyond Laxmi Road is crucial,” added Kavita Mali. “Today brought back memories of my childhood. The games taught me road discipline and the importance of following traffic rules,” reminisced Sheetal Dabhade. “This initiative will instill road discipline, teaching people to avoid distractions like phone usage while walking. This is my second year attending this event,” expressed Nikita Waghale. “This is a commendable initiative. I experienced a simulation where I wore goggles simulating drunkenness, offering insights into the challenges faced by intoxicated drivers,” shared Shreya Gogawale. “People must drive responsibly, refraining from using footpaths for vehicles. Embracing electric vehicles and bicycles is imperative,” emphasised Devansh Kate, a student at New English High School in Rambagh.



FIRE DESTROYS OLD WADA IN KASBA PETH

STAFF REPORTER

In the early hours on Monday, an old wada in Kasba Peth caught fire, an official informed. Fortunately, the swift action of the firefighting team prevented a serious accident and further spread, with no injuries reported due to the wada being vacant for many years. Regrettably, the fire led to the complete destruction of the two-storey front and three-storey rear wooden structure of Mahajan Wada, situated near the Peshwa-era Mote Wada in the Shaniwarwada area of Kasba Peth. Promptly responding to the incident, the Kasba Peth fire brigade, led by Kamlesh Choudhary, efficiently controlled the fire with the aid of dedicated firefighters and water deployment, averting a potential disaster. The cause of the fire was not known. But there was a lot of wooden structure in the old wada. It took about an hour to douse the flames and bring the situation under control for the six fire tenders and water tankers.



Mockery ensues over low turnout at Irani’s event

STAFF REPORTER / Pune

Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) mocked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) following a notably low turnout at Union Minister Smriti Irani's event in Pune on Sunday. Irani's visit was aimed at inaugurating the 'Do Dhage Sri Ram Ke Liye' campaign, a joint initiative by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirath Kshetra and the Heritage Handweaving Revival Charitable Trust. This 13-day campaign involves nearly 10 lakh people weaving vastras (clothes) for Ayodhya's Ram Lalla, predominantly crafted from silk and adorned with silver zari.



The event took place at a handloom store near Goodluck Chowk in Shivajinagar, with plans for Irani to proceed to the Modern College Ground for her scheduled

speech. However, due to the sparse turnout, Irani chose not to address the gathering and departed for Mumbai. Shiv Sena (UBT) and AAP took aim at the BJP for the apparent lack of attendance at Irani's speech. "Empty chairs at the public meeting of BJP leader and Union Minister Smriti Irani in Pune. And yet, BJP claims about winning Maharashtra," Shiv Sena (UBT) tweeted. AAP Maharashtra Spokesperson Mukund Kirdat sarcastically remarked, "Huge public response to #SmritiIrani ji in Pune today." "Unfortunately, she had to immediately leave due to some urgent meeting" ha ha... This is the BJP's state in the city," he added.

LAST WORD

Programme on mental health, sex ed draws 21+ schools

GAURAV KADAM / Pune

The Mukta Charitable Foundation (MCF), a non-profit organisation based in Pune, organised the 'Bal Yuva Mahotsav 2023', focussing on vital themes such as mental health, sex education, and the impact of social media. The event unfolded on Sunday at the Lata Mangeskar Auditorium in Shivajinagar and drew participation from over 21 schools, including New English High School in Rambagh, Nutan Marathi Vidyalaya on Bajirao Road, Karmveer Bhaurao Patil Vidyalaya in Yerwada, Symbiosis Primary School on Prabhat Road, and Vijaymal Kadam Girls School in Erand-

wane, among others. Throughout the programme, students from these schools actively engaged in a range of competitions, including street plays, debates, and essay writing. They tackled pertinent topics such as the 'Importance of Mental Health,' 'Harmful Effects of

Social Media,' and 'Significance of Sex Education,' expressing their insights and opinions. Speaking to the Free Press Journal, Dr Rupa Agarwal, Secretary and Trustee, MCF, highlighted that the event aimed to nurture the students' creativity. "When students from diverse schools come together, they interact and draw inspiration from each other's achievements," she added

from diverse schools come together, they interact and draw inspiration from each other's achievements," she added. Dr. Sumita Lalwani, a renowned gynecologist and obstetrician, graced the occasion as the chief guest. In her address, she advocated for

girls to maximize their educational opportunities in line with their capabilities. Agarwal also addressed the gathering, shedding light on the advantages and drawbacks of excessive social media usage. She stressed the importance of maintaining a

balance in its usage to safeguard oneself. Dr Prakash Mahajan, President of MCF, expounded on the significance of adopting a healthy approach towards various youth competitions, promoting holistic growth in today's dynamic environment.



Operation Muskaan

590 MISSING WOMEN & KIDS RESCUED IN NOV

GUNWANTI PARASTE / Pune

In a month-long drive throughout November, the Pune Police, under Operation Muskaan, successfully rescued 590 missing women and children across the city. This concerted effort, led by the Pune Police's Crime Branch and the local Muskaan team, aimed to tackle the urgent issue of missing individuals, with a particular focus on women and children. Despite this commendable success, 34 children remain unlocated, prompting the establishment of a specialised police unit dedicated to their pursuit. Covering the jurisdiction of 32 police stations, Operation Muskaan emerged as a crucial initiative to trace missing women and children. Executed between November 1 and November 30, the campaign gained momentum under the guidance of Police Commissioner Reetesh Kumar. The success of Operation Muskaan owes much to the dedicated teams deployed at all police station levels. These teams' concerted efforts were instrumental in tracing numerous missing individuals, with a crucial collaboration between the Muskaan team and the crime

branch amplifying these efforts. Local citizens, intellectuals, shopkeepers, and both small and large business owners actively contributed by providing crucial information, significantly aiding in the search operation. Systematic collection of data pertaining to missing and abducted children and women in the city facilitated a coordinated search operation conducted by the

Muskaan team in tandem with the crime branch at local police stations. Following the community's substantial support, the police officially declared Operation Muskaan a success upon locating 590 women, girls, and children in Pune. The Muskaan team now intensifies its efforts to resolve the remaining 34 cases involving abducted children, underscoring the unwavering commitment of the Pune Police to safeguarding the city's residents, especially its vulnerable population.



Lok Adalat resolves over 83,000 cases

STAFF REPORTER

Pune district has once again demonstrated its prowess in dispute resolution by successfully settling over 83,000 cases in Lok Adalat held on December 9. This remarkable achievement includes the resolution of 33,359 pending cases and 50,458 cases at the pre-litigation stage. Lok Adalat, following an informal procedure, enables parties involved to settle disputes outside the formal courtroom setting. The decisions or awards issued during Lok Adalat are considered final and non-appealable, ensuring swift

resolution. In the National Lok Adalat held on December 9, coordinated by the National Legal Services Authority in New Delhi and the Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority at the High Court Bombay, Pune District Legal Services Authority (PDSLA), guided by Principal District and Sessions Judge and PDSLA Chairman KP Nandedkar, achieved significant success. Sonal Patil, the Secretary of PDSLA, disclosed some statistics regarding the resolution of cases in Maharashtra, with Pune standing out as among the top-performing districts.

School principal faces fraud charges

STAFF REPORTER

The Yerwada police have filed a case against Goenka International School principal Shefali Tiwari, Tanmay Sharma, and Rohit Bhargava, along with another individual, for alleged fraud of a ₹1.17 crore, the official informed on Monday. Purnima Milind Kothari, a 63-year-old resident of Uttam Tower, Yerwada, complained to the Yerwada Police Station. In the FIR, Tiwari claimed to be the director of Ayushmati Trust and, in 2019, informed Kothari that the trust would establish Canary International High School in the Shastri-nagar area of Yerwada. As a partner in the school, Kothari was persuaded to invest a substantial amount with the promise of profitable returns over one to two years. Consequently, Tiwari obtained ₹1.17 crore from Kothari, who, along with his son, held a 70 percent partnership in the school. De-



spite this, Tiwari did not grant any authority to Kothari. Instead, he misappropriated the funds from the school's bank account, collected under the guise of educational fees. Subsequently, the school closed, and Tiwari falsely informed students and parents that the closure resulted from a lack of permission, defaming Kothari by blaming him for the shutdown. In response to this alleged cheating, Kothari filed a private criminal suit, leading the court to order a case against Tiwari and the three others under Section 156(3). Police Sub-Inspector Angre is currently overseeing the investigation.

Ajit Pawar against Shinde as CM in 2019, now deputy under him: Raut

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

NCP leader Ajit Pawar was vehemently opposed to Eknath Shinde being made the chief minister. According to Shiv Sena (UBT) spokesperson Sanjay Raut, in 2019 there was a proposal to form a Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) with the Congress, NCP and the Shiv Sena as its components. However, NCP leaders, including Ajit Pawar, Dilip Walse-Patil, Sunil Tatkare and Jayant Patil, made it clear that they will not work under the chief ministership of Shinde. Pawar was spearheading the campaign against Shinde, Raut told media persons on Monday. He claimed to have proof to back up his allegation.

Raut noted that Pawar, who was against Shinde four years ago, is now working under him. He further claimed that even the BJP had its reservations about making Shinde as the CM.

Sources in the Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) said there was no substance in Raut's claim. They alleged that Raut was trying to create a rift with the partners of the ruling MahaYuti. He said when Uddhav Thackeray's name was proposed for chief ministership, all members of the MVA unanimously endorsed the proposal.

MSRTC launches digital payment facility for tickets

Mumbai: Passengers can now pay for their tickets through UPI on all buses of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), an official said on Monday. The state-run transport body has replaced the old ticketing machines with Android devices for digital payment of bus fares, he said, adding that the corporation has given around 34,000 Android ticketing machines to conductors, and these devices are equipped with various digital payment facilities. The new ticketing machines will generate a QR code, which passengers can scan on their UPI applications and pay the fare. The MSRTC is one of the largest state-run road transport bodies in the country, with a fleet of around 15,000 buses. The corporation's buses ferry more than 60 lakh passengers across the state daily. —PTI

CBI wants to quiz Rana over Mack Star loan

CHARUL SHAH JOSHI / MUMBAI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday approached the special court hearing the cases related to Yes Bank, seeking to question former bank promoter Rana Kapoor in prison in connection with the loan granted to Mack Star Marketing Pvt Ltd, one of the group companies of Rakesh Wadhawan.

As per the CBI's case, Kapoor while holding a post of managing director and CEO of Yes Bank from 2011-16, had hatched a criminal conspiracy with Wadhawan and his son Sarang, promoters of M/s HDIL. The bank, on Kapoor's approval, sanctioned six term loans worth Rs200.3 crore to M/s Mack Star Marketing Pvt Ltd (a group company of Wadhawan) for lease rental discounting/ general corporate purposes/ and renovation and refurbishment of building Kaledonia in Andheri.

Mack Star was a joint venture promoted by Ocean Deity Investments Holdings Limited (ODIL), a registered company under Mauritius law, and a private company owned by the Wadhawans. The agency claimed that the loan amounts were not used for the sanctioned purpose and diverted by the borrower. The diverted funds were allegedly used to discharge liabilities of HDIL and its group companies towards Yes Bank.

While Kapoor is in prison for his involvement in other crimes, he was granted bail in the present case in April this year for having spent more than two years in prison without trial.

The special PMLA judge MG Deshpande had questioned this.

Call grows for 100% farmer loan waiver

RAMU BHAGWAT/ NAGPUR

The Opposition on Monday launched a stringent assault on the Eknath Shinde government both inside and outside the state legislature which is in session in Nagpur. While leader of opposition Vijay Wadettiwar mounted the attack in the state assembly during a short notice discussion, state Congress president and top party leaders took out a massive morchha (protest march) from Dikshabhoomi to Vidhan Sabha to demand complete loan waiver for affected farmers in the state.

In the short debate on the farm losses and poor relief from insurance companies, Wadettiwar lashed out at the ruling coalition for the inadequate compensation through crop insurance scheme to farmers affected by the drought like situation. The compensation for farmers, cotton growers and orange growers was meagre and in some cases in two digits, Wadettiwar asserted on the floor of the House.

He said farmers across the state were facing a severe financial crisis caused by first poor rains, untimely rains and then hailstorm and bad weather. Joined by his party colleagues Balasaheb Thorat, Sunil Kedar, Nana Patole and Jayant Patil (NCP), Wadettiwar accused the government of protecting the insurance companies whose

survey reports were fudged depriving farmers claims for recovery of losses.

Wadettiwar alleged that one farmer has received a meagre claim amount of Rs3 while another one got Rs37 only. A small farmer has approached the local police station seeking protection as he had received a 'princely sum' of Rs57. He contended that the amount was too big and he would need protection from thieves!

Alleging nexus between government officials and insurance companies, Wadettiwar said the usual initial survey of the crop damage was never completed. He said the state accounts for 37% of farmers suicides in the country and sought strong action against bogus seed companies.

Jayant Patil while supporting the demands said the government is busy holding publicity events.

Outside the Vidhan Sabha, Nana Patole led a large protest march tagged as 'Halabol' against the Shinde government for neglecting farmers. He said time had come for throwing out the anti-farmer government. "The BJP has misruled the country for the last nine years. It claims success in recent elections in three states but is afraid of holding civic elections in Maharashtra," he roared, demanding complete loan waiver for farmers and claiming that his party will sweep the next elections.

During state legislature's winter session, Leader of opposition Vijay Wadettiwar mounts attack on govt; says relief for farmers meagre



'Disband ST workers co-op bank board'

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Anil Parab says bank going down under Gunaratna Sadavarte; Walse-Patil admits his dept and RBI have received scores of complaints

Ramu Bhagwat/ NAGPUR

Shiv Sena (UBT) member Anil Parab and others made a strong demand for dissolution of the State Transport Employees' Cooperative bank board of directors, accusing its chairman Gunaratna Sadavarte of total mismanagement that could lead the institution to bankruptcy.

Raising the matter in the state legislative council during question hour, Parab said the bank, which had once very strong financial fundamentals, was going down under the leadership of Sadavarte, threatening the fortunes of thousands of state transport corporation employees who had parked their savings in it.

Parab alleged that Sadavarte ruled roughshod over the bank without paying heed to others. While Sadavarte and his

wife were inducted as technical board members, his 23-year-old brother-in-law, with no adequate experience in the profession, was appointed as the managing director of the bank, Parab said.

Moreover, the new directors have slashed the interest rate on deposits from 9% to 7% causing a capital flight. Fixed deposits totalling Rs180 crore have already been withdrawn by the account holders while applications for with-



What ails, as per Parab

- 1 Sadavarte ruled roughshod over the bank
- 2 His wife was inducted as technical board member
- 3 His 23-year-old inexperienced brother-in-law appointed MD
- 4 Interest rate on deposits slashed from 9% to 7%
- 5 Fixed deposits totalling ₹180 crore have withdrawn by holders
- 6 Applications for withdrawal of ₹450 crore pending
- 7 Among the 18 board members, 14 had objected to the functioning of Sadavarte
- 8 RBI served a notice to the bank

drawal of Rs450 crore were pending before the bank, he said. Parab added that among the 18 board members, 14 had objected to the functioning of Sadavarte and Reserve Bank

of India served a notice to the bank and hence the government should dissolve the present board of directors and appoint an administration to save fixed deposits and accounts of poor ST workers. PWP member Jayant Patil said that the bank has been built with the hard work of ST employees but Sadavarte's dictatorship is ruining the bank's prospects as deposits have been withdrawn following the appointment of new board of directors. The cash-deposit ratio of the bank has gone above 95% and will increase the problems of the bank in the coming days.

Leader of Opposition Ambadas Danve, Sena (UBT) member Sachin Ahir and others created noisy scenes in the House on the issue and demanded immediate dissolution of the board and appointment of an administrator. They were pointing out that most of the directors are unhappy over the working style of Sadavarte.

Responding to the question, minister for cooperatives, Dilip Walse-Patil, admitted that his department and the Reserve Bank of India had received complaints against the directors of the bank. The cooperative department had initiated an inquiry against irregularities under the Cooperative Rule of 89 (A) after the RBI intervention.

ED withdraws plea challenging Bhujbal's, nephew's travel nod

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has withdrawn its plea challenging the permission granted by lower court to NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) leader Chhagan Bhujbal and his nephew Sameer Bhujbal to travel abroad in 2018. Bhujbal and his family were arrested in 2016 on

charges of money-laundering related to the Maharashtra Sadan scam while he was in the opposition. They were released on bail by the high court in May 2018. The trial court allowed them to renew their passports and gave nod to travel abroad, which the ED challenged.

ISIS module accused says influenced by 2003 blast accomplice

ASHISH SINGH & CHARUL SHAH JOSHI / MUMBAI

Saif Nachan, one of the 15 arrested accused by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the action against ISIS module on Saturday, was influenced by Hasib Mulla, an accomplice in the 2003 Mulund train bomb blast case. Saif, however, claimed that after the ban on the Students' Islamic Movement in India (SIMI), he was not involved in any terror frontal organisation.

Saif's brother Akif has been previously arrested by the NIA in connection with the Pune ISIS module. While probing Akif's links, the NIA had recorded Saif's statement as witness.

Saif said he had joined SIMI as he was influenced by Mulla and Adil Khot, one of the arrested accused in the ISIS module busted by the Pune on Saturday. Said said he completed his BCom in 1997 from a college in Bhiwandi and became a member of SIMI during college days. In April 2001, he visited Delhi, staying at the SIMI hostel in Zakir Nagar, and was appointed as an office bearer of the monthly magazine 'Islamic Movement'. It was since then that he was actively involved in the activities of the organisation, which was later banned thrice; the first time being 2001 after September 26 attacks in the US that year.

Saif was involved in the construction business before he was arrested and claimed

that after the ban he was not associated with any functionaries or organisations.

Besides the statement of Saif, the NIA also recorded the statement of Akbar Ali Khotal, a labourer, who was arrested with Saquib Nachan in the 2003 blast case. In his statement, Khotal said he joined SIMI at the age of 17 and held the post of 'Ansar' for SIMI activities. He was arrested in a SIMI case and granted bail in 2001.

During that time, Hasib Mulla, a close associate of Saquib and an arrested accused, contacted him for the first time. Khotal was tasked with assisting Saquib in Adhar Wadi Kalyan jail with food. After three to four months, Saquib was granted bail. Shortly afterward, Saquib called Khotal to Padgha for a meeting, during which he was told that strong boys were needed for weapon training.

Khotal then provided two names and said the two underwent a two-day training session, learning to fire AK-47 and pistol near Padgha.

In mid-2002, Saquib and Mulla visited Khotal's place to rent a room in Kalyan. Khotal arranged a room in Kongaon in Bhiwandi, and Saquib deposited Rs30,000, paying Rs1,500 as rent. Khotal was then assigned the duty to pick up the guest and drop him. Later, after his arrest, he came to know that the guest was a Pakistani national named Ifan.

Another accused, also arrested in blast case, had joined SIMI when he was 17 years old

Onion export: CM's promise & Fadnavis' claim

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday said his government will find a way so that farmers do not suffer losses due to the ban on export of onions. During his visit to Shiv Sena party office in the Vidhan Bhavan premises in Nagpur ahead of the third day of the state legislature's winter session, he said the state government always stands with farmers of the Maharashtra, adding that he had spoke with Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Piyush Goyal on the phone.



Meanwhile, deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis told the legislative council that the Centre is ready to purchase onions from farmers which remain unsold or cannot be auctioned even as attempts are being made to find a way out in view of the export ban. Fadnavis' statement, too, comes in the backdrop of his meeting with Goyal in Mumbai on Saturday.

Earlier, Leader of Opposition in the council, Ambadas

Danve said, "Farmers are badly affected by unseasonal rains. The ban on export of onions by the Centre is not in the interest of farmers, who are forced to resort to protests in Maharashtra."

At the forefront of the protests is NCP chief Shared Pawar, who has demanded a roll-back of the export ban. On Monday, joined a rasta-roko by onion farmers in Nashik on the Mumbai-Agra National Highway.

Addressing onion growers in Chandwad village, Pawar claimed the Centre is ignoring the hard work of farmers and said cultivators need to be united and demand their rights. "Nashik can show the way," he said, adding, "I will go to New Delhi tomorrow (Tuesday) and raise the issue with the authorities as well as in the ongoing Parliament session. The state and Union government have the responsibility to help farmers."

During the Nashik morchha, the traffic movement on the highway was disrupted for some time and police security was consequently stepped up. "We were forced to come out

on the streets and stage rasta-roko so that the government would wake up. This agitation is not only for Chandwad, but for the farmers all over Maharashtra and the whole country," he said.

Meanwhile, onion auctions, which were stopped indefinitely in wholesale markets of the district from Saturday, started at most places on Monday. At the Lasalgaon APMC, the country's biggest wholesale onion market, 150 vehicles of onions arrived. Auctions also began at Vinchur and Nipad sub-committees of the Lasalgaon APMC on Monday. With agencies

IN ALL SPLENDOUR



A Beating Retreat and Tatoo Ceremony (BRTC) was held as part of the Navy Week at Gateway of India on Monday evening. The celebration will continue till Dec 14. SALMAN ANSARI

Poor AQI: 7 public project sites under scanner

High court asks BMC and pollution control board to take action in case norms not followed

URVI MAHAJANI / MUMBAI

The Bombay high court has directed the BMC and the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) to carry out joint inspection of seven major public projects sites in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) to check if there is compliance of air pollution control rules and regulations.

The HC has also specified that in case any of the stakeholders at these sites is found not to be following (air pollution mitigation) norms or deviating from the norms, requisite legal action be taken. The seven sites are — Road concretisation work at St Anthony Road at Bandra, Madhu Park Road at Khar, bullet train site at BKC, Versova Bandra Sea Link project, Metro Metro Rail 3 site, MTHL and Mumbai coastal road site.

A division bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Arif Doctor directed the joint inspection following news reports that stated that

on account of construction activity undertaken at these sites a lot of dust is being generated which adds to worsening air quality. The HC, on October 31, had taken suo motu (on its own) cognisance of the deteriorating air quality in the city and metropolitan region.

On Monday, the Chief Justice remarked that although steps are being taken to mitigate air pollution, enough is not being done. After going through the report submitted by court constituted expert committee, the HC said, "What we find is that though air quality of the city has improved, however, the Air Quality Index (AQI) is still largely at moderate level, which is an indicator that such air quality will have discomfort for persons with breathing and heart problems and also to younger and older persons." The bench added that there needs to be a collective effort to bring AQI below 50.

The bench took note that



ON RADAR	
◆	Road concretisation work at St Anthony Road, Bandra
◆	Madhu Park Road, Khar
◆	Bullet train site at BKC
◆	Versova Bandra Sea Link project
◆	Metro Metro Rail 3 site
◆	MTHL
◆	Mumbai coastal road

the MPCB had taken action and passed closure orders to industries not complying with the norms. Similarly, action has been taken by the transport department.

Senior advocate Janak Dwarkadas, appearing for NGO Vanashakti, pointed out that there were discrepancies in data available on websites of state and Central pollution control boards. Besides, these only gave data with regard to AQI, which is not the only parameter to monitor air pollution. Dwarkadas said that PM (particulate matter) 2.5, PM10, SO2 and NO also need to be measured.

The HC has accordingly directed senior level officers of MPCB and CPCB to file affidavits giving details as to how air pollution in the city is being measured and monitored. Affidavit shall also disclose the number of equipment/ installation available and whether they are adequate as per standard set by CPCB.

A report was submitted in

2021 by an expert committee composed of representatives of MPCB, MMRDA, police department, NEERI, Automotive Research of India, Society of Indian Automotive Manufacturers, IIT-B, and one environmental expert. This committee's mandate was to examine vehicular pollution and suggest mitigating measures.

However, till date no action has been taken on this report. The HC has asked the government to consider the report and make a decision on the same within eight weeks.

Senior advocate Milind Sathe, appearing for the BMC, informed the HC that citizens can lodge complaints in their website, helpline number 1916 and on their app. The HC had earlier asked Advocate General Birendra Saraf to suggest to the government to consider framing some legislative mechanism on the lines of the Central legislation for the National Capital Region for monitoring air pollution.

100 UG Ayurveda course seats vacant

MUSAB QAZI / MUMBAI

As many as 100 seats of Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS), often the second choice of medical aspirants after Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS), have been left vacant in colleges across the state this academic year. Last year, all the seats were filled at the end of the admission process.

The surprising vacancies in Ayurveda colleges, which usually witness intense competition, are recorded after a sharp increase in the number of institutes and seats this year. Data from the state CET cell shows that 105 Ayurveda colleges, 22 government-run and aided and 83 private colleges participated in the centralised admissions this year, offering more than 7,000 seats. By comparison, there were only 5,429 seats available in 2022-23 at 74 institutes.

While 97 of the BAMS vacant seats are in private institutes, three are in government-run and aided colleges. Many of the vacancies are in the new institutes that were granted permission this year.

By contrast, most of the seats in the two other undergraduate AYUSH courses, Homeopathy and Unani, have been taken. While only 25 of around 4,000 BHMS seats are lying vacant, all the 300-odd spots for BUMS have been

filled. This is in contrast to the last admission cycle when 266 Homeopathy seats were without any takers.

The experts blamed the vacancies in Ayurveda colleges on the delay in granting approvals to the new institutes by the National Commission For Indian System Of Medicine (NCISM), the apex regulating body for Ayush under the central government.

"If the Centre has set November 30 as the cut-off date

Last year, all the seats were filled at the end of the admissions

for admissions, it should have granted approvals to the new institutes much earlier," said a counsellor from the Admission Link, a Pune-based medical education consultancy firm.

According to the CET cell, the absence of any institute-level admission round was another reason for the vacant seats. "The Ayush Admissions Central Counseling Committee (AACCC) had instructed us to conduct the entire process in the centralised manner. As it is, the institute-level admissions for MBBS have been disapproved," said the official. The Pune counsellor faulted the CET cell for letting uninterested candidates continue participating in the admission process.



30 electrical meters, car damaged after fire in Thane building

Thane: Thirty electrical meters were destroyed after a fire broke out in the meter box room of a seven-storey building in the wee hours of Monday, the civic officials said. No person was injured in the incident, Thane

Municipal Corporation's disaster management cell chief Yasin Tadv said. The front portion of a car parked by the side of the meter box room was also damaged as the fire spread to it, he added.

Murder accused arrested after absconding for 11 months

SURESH GOLANI
MIRA-BHAYANDAR

After evading arrest for more than 11 months, a 24-year-old man was finally arrested for his alleged involvement in the brutal murder of a delivery executive in Mira Road on January 30. The gruesome crime was the fallout of a petty dispute between the maternal uncle of the deceased, Ankush Raj, with the accused at a petrol pump in Kashimira. Hailing from Rajasthan, the victim had recently arrived in the city and was a resident of Queens Park in Mira Road. He had bagged the delivery executive job with an e-commerce platform just over a month before he was murdered.

On the day of the incident, Ankush's uncle Harsh Raj had picked up a fight with one of the accused, Ayush, over breaking the queue at a petrol pump. The deceased had intervened to resolve the issue. An irate Ayush called his friends and started searching for Harsh to take revenge. However, they spotted the victim near the Jangid Circle and assaulted him with choppers and swords, leading to his death. While 11 assailants were arrested within four hours of the attack, their three accomplices had remained absconding.

Recently, the crime detection team received a tip-off that one of the fugitives, Rohit Paswan, would arrive to meet his relative near the Chene Bridge in Kashimira. Under the guidance of senior Inspector Chandrakant Sarode, a team led by Inspector (crime) Rahukumar Patil laid a trap and arrested Paswan on Saturday.

An offence under the relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Arms Act had been registered at the Mira Road police station against all the accused who are either students or working as delivery executives.

No Marathi boards on 5% shops

BMC has handed inspection notices to these establishments; it will now move court which will decide penalty amounts; 30,474 shops checked

SHEFALI PARAB-PANDIT
MUMBAI

Just 1,515 or 5% out of 30,474 shops inspected so far by the BMC are not complying with the Marathi signboard rule, said a civic official. In the last two weeks, the municipality fanned out across the city's 24 wards to check if the establishments have put up boards displaying their names in Marathi in Devanagari script. As per the latest data gathered till Monday, the D ward (Malabar Hill, Grant Road) accounted for 21 non-compliant establishments, while the S ward (Vikhroli, Bhandup) had 19 such shops.

Between November 28 and December 11, the erring shops were handed

1 Action taken between November 28 and December 11

2 D ward (Malabar Hill, Grant Road) accounts for 21 non-compliant shops



3 S ward (Vikhroli, Bhandup) has 19 such shops
4 ₹1 lakh is maximum penalty while BMC can slap ₹2,000 fine daily on repeat offenders

inspection notices in accordance with the sections 35 and 36A of the amended Maharashtra Shops and Establishments (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act. Next, the civic body will move court seeking directions to penalise the shops. The Act's section 29 al-

lows for a maximum penalty of Rs2,000 per employee and a maximum fine of Rs1 lakh per establishment. The fine amount will be decided by the court. The BMC clarified that a penalty of Rs2,000 will be slapped everyday on the shop if they violate the rule continuously.

The action comes after the two-month deadline set by the Supreme Court for the shops to install Marathi signboards in Devanagari script expired on November 25. In January 2022, the government amended the aforementioned Act, making it compulsory for establishments to display signboards in Marathi with the font size equal to other languages on them.

In September 2022, the apex court had restrained the civic body from taking coercive action against non-compliant shops. It had given the directive while hearing a petition filed by the Federation of Retail Traders Welfare Association which had challenged the constitutionality of the amendment.

'Society should treat intellectually disabled children with empathy'

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

City-based non-profit organisation, Ummeed Child Development Centre, on Sunday held a 'Family Day' for children with disabilities. Held at Dadar Parsi Colony Gymkhana ground, the event aimed to highlight the challenges faced by kids suffering from intellectual disabilities while accessing public spaces. The programme's objective was to foster the need for inclusivity and understanding for these children in society.

Aparna Rao, mother of 19-year-old Prerna Nayak who is a cerebral palsy and epilepsy patient, said, "Many places lack wheelchair accessibility, making travelling a challenge. In Mumbai, poor condition of roads poses difficulties for those in wheelchairs, especially for our children." Talking about the societal attitudes towards special children, she pointed out that

“These kids may look different. People often ask me questions about what's wrong with my kids.

We just want to be treated like any other family. People should understand us and our children with kindness.

Deviya, parent of 11-year-old boy suffering autism spectrum disorder



“Special kids are often viewed as alien and people either stare at them with a strange look or avoid them as if

they carry a contagious disease. It's important to raise awareness that these children shouldn't be looked down upon or pitied.

Aparna Rao, mother of 19-year-old cerebral palsy and epilepsy patient

they are often viewed as alien and people either stare at them with a strange look or avoid them as if they carry a contagious disease, she said. "It's important to raise awareness that these children shouldn't be looked down upon or pitied. As parents, all we seek is love and empathy for our kids, not sympathy," she underlined.

Echoing similar sentiments, Deviya, the parent of an 11-year-old boy suffering

autism spectrum disorder and ADHD, said, "These kids may look different. People often ask me questions about what's wrong with my kids. We just want to be treated like any other family. People should understand us and our children with kindness." Another parent Anupam Tiwari was thankful that his daughter Nehal Tiwari, 24, has not faced much difficulty when going out or being in public spaces, so far.

Central Rly restores traffic 14 hours after goods train derailed at Kasara

Operation was fraught with challenges of working in ghat section during night

KAMAL MISHRA / MUMBAI

After a 14-hour struggle fraught with challenges of working in ghat section during night, the Central Railway restored traffic, affected by derailment of a goods train, at around 8.30am on Monday.

The versatile Middle line proved instrumental in accommodating traffic in both directions during the recovery process.

An official said an enquiry has been ordered in the same regards and the accident cause would be ascertained once the report comes. However, sources said that miscommunication between the main driver and banker engine driver or rail fracture could have led to the derailment.

The incident, which disrupted schedules of 27 passenger trains, occurred at



Derailed occurred at 6.31pm Sunday

It chugged on Middle line with manual unsignalled movement operation

Tracks extending up to 150 metres damaged

27 passenger train services were impacted

Down line restored at 7.50am Monday

First stranded train 11401 CSMT-Adilabad Nandigram Express left Kasara at 10.28pm

around 6.31pm on Sunday. Seven wagons of a 45-coach goods train heading towards

Daulatabad from JNPT derailed on the Down line of the Kasara-Igatpuri ghat

section. As a result, Down and Middle line tracks extending up to 150 metres were damaged. Hence, 10 passenger trains were cancelled while 17 others were diverted.

"An accident relief train stationed at Igatpuri, equipped with both instruments and lighting arrangements, arrived at 8.30pm, after which the restoration started in full swing.

Another accident relief van was sent to the site by road from Kalyan," said an official. Four stranded trains were cleared through makeshift arrangements using manual operation systems.

The ghat section, consisting of Up, Down and Middle lines, posed a unique challenge, with the first two lines designated for specific directions, the official added.

PILLAR OF FAITH



Renovation work of the Gol Deval temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva, is in full swing — SALMAN ANSARI

Flamingo rescued from creek in Kanjurmarg

Mumbai: A flamingo was rescued after it got stuck in the mud on the banks of a creek in Kanjurmarg on Monday, a forest official said. A fisherman spotted the bird and contacted the forest department, he said. The department,

in coordination with RAWW (Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare), rescued the bird, the official said. The bird was treated and declared fit to be released after a few hours, said Pawan Sharma, founder, RAWW.

Bandra police file cases against 11 motorcyclists

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

Police in Bandra have filed a case against 11 motorcyclists for reckless driving.

According to the police, on Sunday, between 1pm and 3pm, officials set up a 'nakabandi' in front of the MMR-DA office in Bandra (West). During the Nakabandi, the police observed numerous motorcyclists riding dangerously. Consequently, the police filed charges against 11 motorcyclists under sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Motor Vehicle Act on Sunday.

The accused have been identified as Amir Tisekar, 24; Siddhe Sarkare, 25; Aebaj Shaikh, 24; Mohammad Ranghale, 24; Shanwaj Bagwan, 21; Anjal Khan, 20; Mohammad Khan, 20; Jagat Varma, 20; Salman Shaikh, 29; Sarfaj Shaikh, 19; and Danial Presswala, 19.

BMC to repair 26 bridges across eastern suburbs

SHEFALI PARAB-PANDIT MUMBAI

The BMC will carry out minor and major repairs of 26 bridges in the eastern suburbs. The civic body will spend Rs15.65 crore (including other charges and taxes) on repair work to bridges from Kurla, Sakinaka, Govandi, Mankhurd, Shivaji Nagar and Chembur. Last month, the civic authorities awarded a contract of Rs41 crore for repair work on bridges from Andheri to Malad and Rs27 crore for work from Ghatkopar to Mulund.

The BMC will undertake repair work on six bridges in Kurla and Sakinaka, Govandi, Mankhurd and Shivaji Nagar and Chembur.

As per the recommendation of a consultancy firm, the repair will include minor work of wear and tear on the already existing bridge. The work will also include changing bearings, filling cracks with concrete, repairing the gaps, etc, an official said.

The BMC has already awarded a contract for the repair of 51 bridges from Andheri to Malad and 42 bridges from Ghatkopar to Mulund.

Following the collapse of the Himalaya Bridge at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in 2019, the BMC carried out audits of other bridges across the city.

The civic official from the Bridge Department said that structural audits of bridges will be carried out twice a year.

Official gets show cause notice over unclean highway

SHEFALI PARAB-PANDIT MUMBAI

The BMC has sent a show cause notice to a senior official of Solid Waste Management (SWM) Department for unclean roads on Western Express Highway.

The notice was sent to the official for not ensuring satisfactory cleaning of roads even after using a mechanical sweeping machine.

The BMC has undertaken a 'Deep Clean Drive', which is held every Saturday. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde himself participated in the drive held on December 9, in five administrative wards. So civic officials are out ensuring proper cleaning of roads.

During a recent visit, Additional Municipal Commissioner Sudhakar Shinde (Western Suburbs) found an unclean Western Express Highway stretch from Dahisar to Borivali. Taking serious note of it, he sent a show cause notice to the senior official of the SWM Department on Monday.

Shinde said: "Despite using mechanical sweeping machines, the roads were not cleaned properly. When the chief minister is himself participating in a drive, such negligence by officials will not be tolerated?"

The official has been given seven days to reply to the show cause notice.

In a similar incident, an official from E Ward was transferred after the chief minister expressed his dissatisfaction over uncleanness in Mazgaon Dock area when he visited the place in September.

City tops in data theft cases

SOMENDRA SHARMA / MUMBAI

Statistics provided by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) have revealed that Mumbai ranks first in cases of data theft and second in cases of cyber-blackmailing. As far as metropolitan cities are concerned, Mumbai ranks second in terms of number of cyber-crime cases after Bengaluru.

According to the NCRB, last year Bengaluru registered a total of 9,940 cyber-crime cases, followed by Mumbai 4,724 and Hyderabad 4,436. A deeper analysis of the cases registered revealed that Mumbai tops in Data theft cases (23), followed by Pune

Fraud	Sexual exploitation	Bengaluru	Cyber stalking
Bengaluru 9,289	Mumbai 338	Bengaluru 224	Mumbai 234
Hyderabad 4,412		Kanpur 98	Hyderabad 189
Data theft			
Mumbai 3,751	Mumbai 23	Pune 1	Pune 24
		Surat 1	Delhi 24

and Surat with one each case.

As far as cyber blackmailing cases are concerned, Hyderabad 171 has registered 52 cases, followed by Mumbai 52 and Surat 14. Mumbai has also registered a maximum 338 cases related to cyber sex-

ual exploitation, followed by Bengaluru 224 and Kanpur 98. The city has registered 234 cyber stalking cases, followed by Hyderabad 189, Pune 24 and Delhi 24.

Mumbai also ranks top in the cases where it is related to

personal revenge (35 cases), followed by Patna 23 and Bengaluru 20 and ranks third in cyber fraud related cases (3751), after Bengaluru 9289 and Hyderabad 4412.

"Several initiatives have been taken to tackle the menace of cyber crime. We have regional cyber crime police stations in Mumbai with officers having knowledge and expertise in cyber crime. Citizens can also call on 1930 for help, or report on www.cyber-crime.gov.in. In several cases of cyber fraud we have managed to get back siphoned money to the victim once they timely reported the matter to the police," said a police officer.

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE MERRY

As countdown to Christmas begins, community groups and gymkhanas in the city organise carol competitions, bazaars and children's parties

MANOJ RAMAKRISHNAN MUMBAI

Christmas season has arrived in the city, with community groups and gymkhanas organising carol competitions, bazaars, and children's parties during the weekend.

The Catholic Gymkhana at Marine Drive organised a 'Carol Nite' on Saturday. This was followed by a 'Christmas Tree Party' and a 'Christmas Bazaar' on Sunday. The events at the gymkhana are open to all communities, said Clyde Crasto, additional vice president.

"We have a set programme, with a carol night, bazaars, dance on Christmas and New Year's Eve," added Crasto. The weekend's events were also attended by around 40 children from a non-governmental organisation.

The Willingdon Catholic Gymkhana in Santacruz, known for its big presence in sports, goes all the way with cultural events during Christmas, with events lined up till New Year's Eve. The festival season at the gymkhana, which has around 7,000 members, start-



People purchase decorative items ahead of Christmas —SALMAN ANSARI

ed with a party for children on December 7 and a 'Children's Christmas Tree' event on December 17, followed by a 'Christmas Bazaar' and live music on the next two days. A night of carolling will follow three days later. The season's festivities will end with a dance on Christmas Day and a ball on New Year's Eve.

Maurice Caeiro, general secretary of the gymkhana, said that while programmes are similar to those in the past. "But we just try to do it better. I have a young crowd and the programmes are

planned accordingly," added Caeiro.

Carol singing is a common feature in the list of community events. St Paul Institute of Communication Education (SPICE), Bandra, will be holding a carol competition on December 19 as part of its 'Christmas at St Pauls' event.

The festival started as an outreach programme with Carol singing at the Shanti Avedna Sadan and a blood donation drive but has grown in popularity. Apart from the carols event, the campus will feature a market with food

and jewellery stalls. Margaret DaCosta, programme director for the media college, said that the festival started as an informal celebration six years ago. "Kareena Kapoor, who lives next door, attended the festival one year with her mother and son. The festival has grown since then," said DaCosta.

The East Indian Catholics are dedicating this year's festival to freedom fighter and former Mumbai mayor, Joseph or Kaka Baptista, a member of the community. The celebrations, called the 'Sarvajanic Krist Mahotsav' will feature crib and decoration competitions, carol singing and parties in the urban villages where they mostly live.

"As a fitting tribute to his active involvement in the Sarvajanic movement, we decided to have the Christmas programme under this unity theme. The festival is dedicated to our freedom fighter, Kaka Baptista, and his close connection with Lokmanya Tilak," said Gleason Barretto of the Mobai Gaothan Panchayat, a community group.

Akhtar to be honoured at Ajanta-Ellora Film Festival

PTI / Mumbai

Veteran lyricist-screenwriter Javed Akhtar will be felicitated with the Padmapani Lifetime Achievement Award at the Ajanta-Ellora Film Festival.

Akhtar, the co-writer of Hin-

di cinema classics such as Zanjeer, Deewaar, Sholay, Don, Kaala Patthar and Mr India, will be honoured for his contribution to the Indian film industry on the opening day of the festival's ninth edition, a press release said.



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Pregnant woman held with drugs seeks bail

CHARUL SHAH JOSHI MUMBAI

A 34-year-old woman caught with 15 kilos of mephedrone has approached the special Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, court for bail as she is now six months pregnant.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested the woman from her house on June 10 and recovered mephedrone and cash worth Rs1.1 crore. Following the arrest, when the woman was taken for medical examination, it was revealed that she was pregnant.

On June 23, her lawyers moved a plea to allow her to terminate the pregnancy, stating that this was her fourth child and she was not mentally prepared for it.

In her handwritten statement later submitted to the court, the woman stated that she was remanded in judicial custody till June 16, and was lodged in Byculla women's prison. In the prison her condition deteriorated and she was again taken to the in-house medical officer, who also confirmed that she was six weeks pregnant.

The court after considering her plea on humanitarian grounds allowed her to abort the child in August. However, when she was taken to hospital to operate, her health deteriorated and she was advised against it.

The woman has now approached the court saying that she is six months pregnant and has been suffering from several complications. She has pleaded that she is anaemic and also suffers from Type 2 diabetes. Besides, she has lost lot of weight and suffers from thyroid, hypertension and is getting frequent fever.

The woman has pleaded that she may be granted bail to get admitted in a private hospital. The court has now asked the NCB to submit its reply on the plea.

Developer held in ₹46L cheating case

Ghatkopar-based Niraj Mansukhlal Ved has at least 10 cases against him

AISHWARYA IYER / MUMBAI

Police on Sunday night arrested developer Niraj Mansukhlal Ved from Ghatkopar (East) for various offences including cheating buyers.

The FIR is based on a complaint by a home buyer who said he had paid Rs46 lakh to Ved as down payment for a flat in a building that he was constructing in Ghatkopar. The complainant told the police that the accused had promised him that the building would be constructed in three years, and that he had purchased a flat measuring 1,620 square feet for Rs3.31 crore.

The victim said the builder did not provide him any document in connection with the construction and no building came up over the next three years. When he asked Ved to refund the money, he was promised that it would be returned with interest.

However, when Ved kept delaying the payment, the victim approached the local Pant Nagar police station in Ghatkopar (East) and gave a written complaint. Based on this, the local police registered an FIR on charges of cheating.

Under the guidance of DCP Purushattam Karad (Zone VII), Senior Inspector Rajesh Kevale made the arrest. Ved will be produced in court today.

As per Mumbai Police's records, Ved has at least 10 cases registered against him for similar offences. He has been arrested several times, and has managed to get out on bail every time.

In fact, Mumbai Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) had arrested Ved last year for duping buyers to the tune of Rs6.17 crore. In this case, the EOW had booked Ved's wife Sapna as well for being involved.

Angadia robbed of ₹4cr; cops solve case in 30 hrs

VISHAL SINGH / MUMBAI

Lokmanya Police (LT) Marg Police has solved a robbery involving an Angadia businessman in 30 hours and arrested six people.

According to the police, four people entered the office of KDM Enterprise in Ram Bagh, Kalbadevi, and tied up two employees. They took Rs4.03 crore kept in the office and ran away. The incident took place at 11am Sunday.

DCP Zone 2 Mohit Kumar Garg ordered formation of four teams to investigate the matter.

When the teams examined the CCTV footage near the building, they found that an accused named Harshad Chetanji Thakur (26), who had previously worked with the company, was with one of

his associates nearby. When the accused who robbed the office came down, all of them left together.

According to an official, after committing the crime, the accused took a taxi and went to the nearby Borivali National Park. When the police located the taxi driver, they came to know that the accused had gone towards Patan in Gujarat. The police took the number of their private car and located it somewhere near Palghar.

A police officer said that a LT Marg station team had gone to Gujarat in connection with another case and was returning to Mumbai.

The team investigating this case informed the police team coming towards Mumbai and had the accused arrested in Palghar.

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Armed Forces Flag Day Fund collection drive launched in Thane

Thane: The Armed Forces Flag Day Fund collection drive was launched on Monday in Thane district by Additional Collector Manisha Jaibaye-Dhule. The Armed Forces Flag Day Fund provides assistance for welfare and

rehabilitation of war widows, wives of martyred soldiers and ex-servicemen as well as for activities like education, health care, etc. Jaibaye-Dhule asked people to contribute generously.

MLA raises issue of ailing govt hospital in assembly

SURESH GOLANI
MIRA-BHAYANDAR

In the ongoing assembly winter session, Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik raised the issue of sorry condition prevailing at the lone state government run-Bharat Ratna Bhimsen Joshi Civil Hospital in Bhayandar. He demanded to immediately recruit much-needed manpower, upgrade infrastructure, give adequate funds for disbursing wages on time and procure better medical equipment. In response to Sarnaik's demands, health minister Tanaji Sawant assured that he will soon visit the hospital to take stock of the grievances and take proactive steps to resolve the woes.

The MLA's demand assumes more significance given the increase in the number of patients visiting the 200-bed hospital. Around 1,07,254 people visited the outpatient department between April and November while the numbers were limited to just 10,728 in the corresponding period in 2020.

As against the total sanctioned staff of 365, the hospital runs with a strength of 267 medical and para-medical workers, including 155 contractual employees (skilled and unskilled). Currently, 98 posts including that of class I medical officers, class IV employees, nursing and technical staff continue to remain vacant. In recent times, manpower shortage, fund crunch and strikes owing to delayed wages have marred the hospital's functioning.

Contractor prints tricolour upside down; booked

AGENCIES / THANE

An offence has been registered against a contractor for allegedly printing the tricolour upside down on banners that served as a backdrop for an event organised to view Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interaction with beneficiaries of Viksit Bharat Sankalpa Yatra, the police said on Monday.

The banners were displayed on the stage during the programme held on the premises of Kalher gram panchayat in Bhiwandi on December 9. Based on a complaint lodged by the block development officer of Bhiwandi, an offence under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, has been registered against the contractor, the official from Narpoli police station said. No arrest has been made so far.

Instead of printing the sample of the background provided by the authorities, the contractor allegedly printed the tricolour upside down. Union Minister of State Kapil Patil was also present during the event.

Mumbai celebrates Human Rights Day 2023

Organised by the Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission, the event was held to raise awareness about people's rights

SWARNA SRIKANTH / MUMBAI

The Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission (MSHRC) on Sunday celebrated Human Rights Day 2023, which marks the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, at the Sahyadri State Guest House. Retired Justice Swatanter Kumar, who has served as the Supreme Court judge and is also former chief justice of the Bombay High Court, was the chief guest of the event which attracted several law students. The theme of Human Rights Day 2023 was 'Freedom, Equality and Justice for All'.

Held to educate people about their rights, the programme was also attended by MSHRC Chairperson Justice (ret'd) KK Tated, Secretary DB Gawade and member MA Sayeed. Other dignitaries included Advocate Milind Sathe from the Bombay High Court and Dr Asha Bajpai, a member of the National Legal Services Authority.

Justice (ret'd) Kumar remarked that the Indian law system is complimented globally. Underlining that the people of the nation hold faith in the court and the judicial sys-

Diabetes, high BP tighten grip on state's youth: Survey

According to data, 14.82 lakh people suffer from hypertension, 2.35 lakh have diabetes; actual count could be more than statistics, says official

SWAPNIL MISHRA / MUMBAI

Around 14.82 lakh people in Maharashtra suffer from high blood pressure, while 2.35 lakh have diabetes, revealed a statewide health screening of citizens aged above 18 years. Under the campaign, 1.14 crore people have been screened and 1.05 crore medically investigated, so far. As per the data, nearly 14 out of 100 people in the state suffer from high blood pressure and two among 10 people are diabetic.

"We have started a campaign 'Healthy Youth, Glory of Maharashtra' in September to medically screen the adults. During the drive, it came to the fore that

Survey highlights



Experts pin blame on hectic lifestyle, climate change

1.14 crore people screened so far

1.05 crore medically investigated

14 out of 100 suffer from high blood pressure

2 among 10 people are diabetic

high blood pressure and diabetes were the common non-communicable diseases to be diagnosed," said an official.

The worrying trend needs to be addressed on a priority basis. Hence, those who have been detected with such ailments are being sent to the

nearest government hospitals for treatment, he added. Meanwhile, the state health department has also created an application for tracking registration of patients, drugs prescribed to them, surgeries and tests performed. The information is recorded through the health

workers and medical officers at all the health centers.

According to health experts, the effects of lifestyle and climate change are now visible in people in the form of a significant shift in the disease profile. Instead of communicable diseases, patients of lifestyle-based problems like diabetes, hypertension, stroke and cancer are increasing, they added. "Diabetes and hypertension are emerging as the two foremost killers in India over the years. Especially in Maharashtra, where urbanisation, stress and unhealthy lifestyle are on the rise, the burden of these diseases is way more than what is mentioned in the official data," said a health official.

Centre's Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra. The move comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a conversation with the Yatra's beneficiaries via video conferencing on Saturday. "We have chalked out an elaborate plan to hold yatras with the pri-

mary objective of achieving widespread coverage of central government schemes, ensuring saturation through line departments, and ultimately delivering their benefits to eligible beneficiaries across the twin-city," said civic chief Sanjay Katkar.

Belapur housing soc residents oppose 'illegal' redevelopment

Allege managing committee doesn't possess conveyance deed; society secretary rejects charges, averring that process is legal

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

One of the biggest cooperative housing societies of CBD-Belapur, Neelgiri Gardens, is in the midst of a controversy over its redevelopment. The core issue allegedly is that it's going in for redevelopment without a conveyance deed, which is a document that transfers ownership of land title from one party to another.

Situated besides Apollo Hospital on Amra Marg in CBD-Belapur, the 22-tower society consists of 480 apartments, 10 bungalows and 20 commercial establishments. One of the society residents said, "The managing committee has published a notice in some newspapers inviting tenders for redeveloping the society. This is against the law. The Registrar of Cooperative Societies and the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) need to take action," the resident demanded.

Stating that the managing committee has also appointed a project management consultant, the resident said that the issue was discussed in the

The managing committee is functioning in an autocratic way and not honouring the sentiments of the majority of residents. When questioned about possession of the conveyance deed, the managing committee said the project management consultant will ensure that the conveyance deed is in place before commencing the redevelopment process.

—Resident

Our process is completely legal since we are in possession of the conveyance deed and other required documents.

—Janardan Deshmukh, Society Secretary

The society has not approached us till date, but if they are going in for redevelopment without the conveyance deed then it is illegal.

—CIDCO official

society's special general meeting. The discussion concluded with the rejection of the proposal on the ground that the society can go for redevelopment only if it gets the conveyance deed.

"The managing committee is functioning in an autocratic way and not honouring the sentiments of the majority of residents. When queried, the managing committee said the project management consultant will ensure that the conveyance deed is in place before commencing the redevelopment process," another resident.

Society Secretary Janardan Deshmukh said, "We

have neither invited and tender, nor we have published any advertisement regarding that. However, we are contemplating doing so by next week. Our process is completely legal since we are in possession of the conveyance deed and other required documents."

A CIDCO official said, "If the society approaches us and submits the required documents, we can give them a lease deed based on which it can apply for the redevelopment. However, the society has not approached us till date and if they are going in for redevelopment without possessing the conveyance deed then it is illegal."

MBMC to publicise Centre's schemes

SURESH GOLANI
MIRA-BHAYANDAR

To promote public welfare schemes, the Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC) has rolled up its sleeves to hold camps taking forward the phase II of the

Real estate Oscars return after five years

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

After a five-year hiatus, the real estate industry is all geared up for its red carpet event of the year: The Golden Pillar Awards, also touted as the 'Oscars' of the property sector, will be held at the Jio World Convention Centre on December 15. The glitzy event promises to be an



Golden Pillar Awards will be held at the Jio World Convention Centre on December 15

evening of celebration showcasing some of the best in the business.

With over 1,800 developers contributing to more than 2,000 nominations, the ceremony is being organised by CREDAI-MCHI, the apex body of real estate developers

in Mumbai Metropolitan Region. The function is being hyped as a big extravaganza with a guest list comprising the who's who of real estate, industry giants, key government officials and celebrities.

According to CREDAI-MCHI President Dominic Romell, the Golden Pillar Awards is not just an award ceremony but a "testament to innovation, excellence and an unwavering commitment to quality in the real estate industry". The awards serve as a beacon, spotlighting the industry's journey towards becoming a USD 6 trillion sector and acknowledging its limitless talent, he added.

The event's second edition features categories spanning residential and commercial projects, sustainable development, architecture and much more. The recognitions have been divided into 42 categories, including The Green Project of Year, Leading Real Estate Developer of the Year, Young Turk of Real Estate, Real Estate Influencer of the Year, Luxury Project of the Year, Best Redevelopment Project of the Year, among others. A panel of judges and tabulation partner Ernst & Young (EY) have ensured transparency in the selection process.

75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav G20

Every Time You PAY TAX, You Take INDIA AHEAD.

Taxpayers liable to pay Advance Tax

- Any assessee, including salaried employee, whose tax liability for the financial year as reduced by tax deducted/collected at source is ₹ 10,000/- or more.

Mode of Payment

- e-Payment is mandatory for all corporates and also those assessees whose accounts are required to be audited u/s 44 AB of the Income-tax Act, 1961.
- e-Payment is convenient for other taxpayers also as it ensures correct credit.

SCHEDULE

Due Date	Amount
On or before 15th December, 2023	75% of the Advance Tax payable

Pay your 3rd instalment of advance tax by

15th December, 2023



For e-Brochures scan QR code



Income Tax Department

Central Board of Direct Taxes

For more information, please visit: www.incometax.gov.in



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Dodgeball tournament inaugurated in Udgir

Sports & Youth Welfare Minister Sanjay Bansode inaugurated a state-level school dodgeball tournament in Udgir, Latur district. 320 players under 17 and 19 years from eight divisions showcased their skills, vying for victory in the exciting competition.



RPI calls for relocation of rape victim's family

MANISH GAJBHIYE

The Republican Party of India (Sachin Kharat faction) has urged for the relocation and protection of the family of a minor rape victim from the backward community residing in Telwadi, Paithan tehsil, within Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar city. This demand arose due to threats to their lives in the village.

The delegation of the party workers including district president Manish Narwade, women's wing district president Kanta Ahire, Pawan Pawar, Akash Sable, Sandeep Ahire, Ujjwala Athawale submitted a memorandum of demands to the additional district collector Dr Arvind Lokhande on Monday. The agitators have threatened to launch a severe agitation in the district if the demands are not met.



According to the information received, the incident unfolded when two individuals, Sanjay Machindra Mohite and Vilas Vinayak Muley from Telwadi village, allegedly gang-raped a 14-year-old girl from a backward community, an incident that came to

light on December 2. Both accused were apprehended by the police. However, the victim's family has been threatened to retract their case against the accused. The accused's cousin, Gorakh Mohite, openly menaced the victim's family to withdraw the case.

Social activists within the Dalit community promptly denounced the appalling incident, highlighting concerns for the safety and security of children and women from backward communities. The RPI (Kharat) delegation met the additional district collector, pressing for the immediate arrest of Mohite. Given the life-threatening situation faced by the victim and her family, they demanded their prompt relocation to Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar city, accompanied by necessary financial aid. Specifically, they called for a government grant of ₹50 lakh and employment for the family members. They urged for stringent implementation of the Atrocity Act and demanded a fast-track court trial, advocating for the maximum penalty—capital punishment—for the accused.

WHAT IS THE CASE?

Two individuals, Sanjay Machindra Mohite and Vilas Vinayak Muley from Telwadi village, allegedly gang-raped a 14-year-old girl from a backward community, an incident reported on December 2. Police arrested both accused, but the victim's family faces threats to withdraw the case from the accused's cousin, Gorakh Mohite.

WHAT ARE RPI'S DEMANDS?

RPI (Kharat) demanded the immediate relocation of the victim's family to Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar city with financial aid, including a ₹50 lakh government grant and employment for family members. They urged strict implementation of the Atrocity Act and a fast-track court trial, seeking the maximum penalty—capital punishment—for the accused.

BAMU postpones exams to Dec 19



STAFF REPORTER

The Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University (BAMU) had planned to conduct examinations for the law, education science, and physical education streams from December 12. However, these exams have been rescheduled to begin on December 19. Dr Bharti Gawali, the director of the board of examination and evaluation, cited clashes with the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC), National Eligibility Test (NET), and Health Department competition exams as the reason for the delay.

The ongoing degree examinations, following the old pattern, began on November 21. Initially, the exams for engineering, architecture, law, education science, and physical education, and many other

er courses were slated for December 12. However, due to conflicting schedules with the MPSC, NET, and health department competition exams scheduled from December 11 to 18, some of these exams have been rescheduled to start on December 19. Responding to student requests, Vice Chancellor Dr Pramod Yeole made this decision.

Dr Satish Davane, the engineering section officer, confirmed that while the exams for engineering, B.Tech, architecture, ME, and MCA courses will proceed as planned to start on December 12, the sessions for law, education science, and physical education will now commence on December 19. Additionally, all postgraduate course examinations in affiliated colleges are rescheduled to start from December 19 as well.

7 PETROL PUMPS FOR THE DISABLED COMING SOON

CSMC comm'r lays foundation stone for one such petrol pump

STAFF REPORTER

On the 41st anniversary of the Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation (CSMC), the municipal commissioner and administrator G Srikanth laid the foundation stone for the city's second petrol pump dedicated to the disabled community in Kan-

The CSMC's first petrol pump for the disabled, established in June 2021, has generated a profit of ₹1.50 crore

chanwadi.

The CSMC's first petrol pump for the disabled, established in June 2021, has generated a profit of ₹1.50 crore. The corporation has now

planned to set up seven such petrol pumps across different areas of the city, with the foundation stone for the first pump laid at Kanchanwadi.

This upcoming petrol pump, to be named 'Saksham Petrol Pump,' will be operated by HPCL and exclusively reserved for individuals with disabilities.

Present at the event were HPCL's Deputy Manager Vishal Sharma, Sales Manager Ajay Sinha, CSMC's Executive Engineer Amol Kulkarni, Deputy Commissioner Kailash Jadhav, Anil Bonde, and others.

Srikanth announced that the foundation stones for the remaining petrol pumps would be laid soon, furthering the corporation's commitment to expanding these services.

BJP takes to the streets in protest against Sahu



BJP women workers in Latur staged a protest against Congress Rajya Sabha MP Dheeraj Sahu, who is at the centre of a massive cash haul exceeding ₹353 crore

PIC: @ADV SANDHYARAJP2

Parents need training in child nurturing: Dr Rasal

STAFF REPORTER

Senior littérateur Dr Sudhir Rasal expressed his views on the present generation's struggle with an inferiority complex and the distractions posed by numerous gadgets. He emphasised the vital necessity of providing parents with training and education for effective

child nurturing. Dr Rasal articulated these thoughts during the book release event for 'Anandi Jagnyachya Vatevar,' authored by Dr Neeta Vijay Pandharipande, held at MIT College.

The book, centered on child nurturing, was unveiled by Dr Rasal and retired judge Narendra Chapalgaonkar. Dr Yadnyaveer Kawale, the president

of Gramodyog Shikshan Mandal, chaired the event. Notable figures such as publisher Manisha Kokil, former Vice-Chancellor Dr Vijay Pandharipande, MIT's Director-General Dr Munish Sharma, principal Dr Bhagwat Katare, Dr Shakuntala Lomte, and other dignitaries graced the occasion.

During his speech, Dr Rasal stressed the incorporation of moral values into life, particularly starting from childhood, as children learn from their families, friends, schools, and society. He highlighted the current societal trend of diminishing emotions and the increasing addiction of children to modern gadgets.



MARKET WATCH			
SENSEX	69,928.53	▲	102.93
NIFTY	20,997.10	▲	27.70
USDINR	83.37	▲	0.03
GOLD	61,300.00	▼	900.00
SILVER	76,000.00	▼	200.00

≡ BIZ BULLETIN

Bullion exchange at Gift City to start silver trade

The India International Bullion Exchange in Gift City, Gujarat is expected to begin trading in silver from Wednesday, two officials in the know told Informist. Located in the International Financial Services Centres in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City, the India International Bullion Exchange received approval from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade a couple of months ago to import silver. Ashok Gautam, the managing director and chief executive officer of the exchange, told Informist that a circular would be issued on the matter. "The circular will be put out for everyone, and it will have the date when silver trading is likely to begin," he said.

Seven airlines owe more than ₹95 crore to AAI

Seven airlines, including Alliance Air, SpiceJet, IndiGo and Emirates, together have pending dues of more than Rs 95 crore to the Airports Authority of India (AAI), according to the government. Other foreign airlines that have pending dues are Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd, British Airways Plc and Qatar Airways, as per data provided to the Rajya Sabha on Monday. The figures exclude interest and take into account only dues that are over Rs 1 crore pending for more than one year as of November 30, 2023.

RVNL bags ₹543 cr project for Indore Metro works

State-owned Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd (RVNL) on Monday said that it has bagged a Rs 543 crore order from Madhya Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation. The project entails construction of elevated stations for the Indore Metro Rail Project. "RVNL-URC JV emerges as the lowest bidder (L1) for part design and construction of elevated viaduct, five elevated metro rail stations...for Indore Metro Rail Project," the PSU said in a filing to BSE.

LIC to infuse ₹250 mn share capital in LIC MF

The board of Life Insurance Corp of India Ltd has approved an infusion of share capital of 250 mln rupees in LIC Mutual Fund Asset Management Ltd on a preferential basis, the company said in an exchange filing on Monday. In September, LIC Housing Finance Ltd infused an incremental capital of around 216 mln rupees in LIC Mutual Fund Asset Management Co through rights issue following the merger of IDBI Mutual Fund with LIC Mutual Fund.

JSW Steel output grows 11% to 22L tonnes in Nov

JSW Steel on Monday posted an 11 per cent rise in its consolidated crude steel production to 22.04 lakh tonne (LT) in November 2023. The company produced 19.94 LT in the same month last year, JSW Steel said in an exchange filing. In India, JSW Steel produced 21.14 LT of steel, up 7 per cent over 19.70 LT in November 2022.

Pepper Advantage unveils global tech hub in Pune

Pepper Advantage, a leading global credit intelligence, credit management and credit investment company, has opened its state-of-the-art Tech Hub in Pune. This marks a significant stride in the company's commitment to fostering innovation and using AI to drive its technology development efforts.

Axis MF's fixed maturity fund collects ₹600 crore

Leading fund house Axis Mutual Fund on Monday said it has garnered over Rs 600 crore from the New Fund Offering (NFO) of its debt scheme, Axis Fixed Term Plan Series 118 (100 days). The fund, a close-ended debt scheme with a moderate interest rate risk and moderate credit risk, opened on November 28 and closed on December 4, Axis Mutual Fund said in a statement.

Inox CVA's ₹1,459-cr IPO opens on Dec 14

InoxCVA, the largest domestic cryogenic storage tank maker, on Monday fixed Rs 627-660 per share as the price band for its Rs 1,459-crore share sale that hits the street on December 14. The Vadodra-based company's promoter and director Siddharth Jain told PTI here that at the upper end of the price band, the company is valued at Rs 5,990 crore.

Royal Enfield opens first warehouse near Kolkata

Two-wheeler manufacturer Royal Enfield has opened its first warehouse in the eastern region to cater to the needs for spare parts, a spokesperson of the company said on Monday. With the establishment of the warehouse near Kolkata, the transit time for the supply of motorcycle parts will reduce significantly and also help develop channel partners.

BMW India to hike car prices up to 2% from Jan

German luxury carmaker BMW on Monday said it will increase the prices of its vehicles by up to 2 per cent across the model range from January 1 to partially offset the adverse impacts of fluctuations in foreign exchange rates and rising input costs. BMW India's decision to implement a price increase across model range is a response to a confluence of factors, BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah said in a statement. —Agencies

RBI cautions against unauthorised campaigns on loan waiver

The Reserve Bank on Monday cautioned public not to fall prey to misleading advertisements related to loan waiver offers in print media as well as on social media platforms. In a statement, the RBI said it has noticed

certain misleading advertisements enticing borrowers by offering loan waivers. These entities, it said, seem to be actively promoting many such campaigns across the print media as well as social media platforms.



RBI STUDY

Tax mop-up buoyant post GST but more reforms needed



INFORMIST / New Delhi

The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax has contributed to heightened tax buoyancy at the state level, but states need to strengthen their tax collection capacity through reforms and effective and innovative administration, a study by the Reserve Bank of India says.

On the non-tax revenue front, ample opportunities exist for states to increase income by adjusting user charges for services like electricity and water, revising royalties from mining, and improving financial management of their public sector undertakings, the study, titled 'State Finances: A Study of Budgets of 2022-23', says.

The theme for this year's report is 'Revenue Dynamics and Fiscal Capacity of Indian States'. The report has been prepared by the Division of State Finances in RBI's Department of Economic and Policy Research.

The central bank expects the gross fiscal deficit of states to stand at 2.8% of gross state domestic product in the current financial year, below the estimate of 3.1% - below the Budget estimate for the second consecutive year - primarily through a reduction in the revenue deficit, according to the RBI's annual publication on state finances released on Monday. The total outstanding liabilities of states are expected to fall to 27.6% of GDP in the current fiscal year from 31.0% in 2020-21 (Apr-Mar), the report said.

Sensex scales 70,000 peak, Nifty closes just shy of 21K on gains in metal shares

Investors will be closely watching the upcoming FOMC meeting today for clues about potential future rate cuts

PTI / Mumbai

Equity benchmark Sensex breached a new milestone of 70,000 points before closing 102 points higher, while Nifty settled just shy of the 21,000 mark on Monday, driven by gains in banking, IT and metal shares.

After a gap-up opening, the 30-share index rose to a record intra-day high of 70,057.83 points. Later, it shed some of the gains to close at 69,928.53 points, showing a rise of 102.93 points or 0.15 per cent.

As many as 18 Sensex shares closed in the green, 11 declined, and one settled unchanged.

The broader Nifty also hit its record trading high of 21,026.10 amid early gains in global markets. The 50-share index



gained 27.70 points or 0.13 per cent to settle just below the 21,000 level at 20,997.10, its all-time closing high.

Among Sensex shares, Ultratech Cement jumped the most by 3.04 per cent. Nestle rose 1.3 per cent, Power Grid 1.05 per cent and Tata Motors 0.85 per cent.

Gains in IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, TCS, Tech Mahindra, NTPC, ITC, JSW Steel and Tata Steel helped the barometer scale a fresh high.

Axis Bank fell the most by 1.26 per cent, M&M by 0.99 per cent and Hindustan Unilever by 0.67 per cent. Maruti, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, and HDFC Bank and Infosys also declined.

"The market crossed 70,000 levels today, while the broader market outperformed the main indices. However, profit booking was evident at higher levels as traders anticipated clues from tomorrow's significant data releases on inflation from the US and India, as well as the IIP," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Investors will be closely watching the

upcoming FOMC meeting tomorrow for clues about potential future rate cuts while expecting to keep rates the same this time, Nair added.

The US Federal Reserve will announce its next move on interest rates on Wednesday.

The US government will report on consumer inflation on Tuesday.

In the broader market, BSE LargeCap advanced by 0.21 per cent, BSE MidCap by 0.91 per cent, while SmallCap rose by 0.71 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Commodities rose by 1.16 per cent, BSE Metal by 1.1 per cent, BSE Services by 0.95 per cent, BSE Capital Goods by 0.76 per cent, BSE Utilities by 0.67 per cent, and BSE Auto by 0.48 per cent.

Retail inflation now stable: FM

Says temporary increases are due to demand-supply mismatches

PTI / New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said retail inflation is now 'stable' and temporary increases in inflation on a few occasions are caused by demand-supply mismatches arising out of global shocks and adverse weather conditions.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said India's retail inflation has declined from an average of 7.1 per cent in April-October 2022 to 5.4 per cent in the corresponding period of 2023. "The retail inflation is now stable and within the notified tolerance band of 2 per cent to 6 per cent. A steady decline in core inflation, estimated after removing volatile food and fuel items from retail inflation, has been critical



in weakening the inflationary pressure in the Indian economy," she said.

The core inflation rate has declined from 5.1 per cent in April 2023 to 4.3 per cent in October 2023. The minister said retail inflation in India has been mostly within acceptable limits after the notification of the inflation tolerance band in 2016.

"Temporary increases in inflation on a few occasions are

caused by demand-supply mismatches arising out of global shocks and adverse weather conditions," Sitharaman added.

Proactive supply-side initiatives by the government and effective demand stabilisation measures by the Reserve Bank of India have helped resolve the demand-supply mismatches and rein in inflation, she added.

The measures taken by the government to restrain inflation including strengthening buffers for key food items, making periodic open market releases, easing imports of essential food items through trade policy measures, and preventing hoarding through imposition/revision of stock limits, and channelling supplies through designated retail outlets.

Five cos to float IPOs this week

PTI / New Delhi

The IPO lane is getting crowded as five companies, including India Shelter Finance and DOMS Industries, have lined up public offers this week on favourable market conditions.

The other three companies whose maiden public issues are slated to open are Inox Group entity Inox India, Jaipur-based retail jewellery company Motisons Jewellers and Mumbai-based Suraj Estate Developers, according to their Red Herring Prospectus (RHPs). Together, these companies are estimated to raise at least Rs 4,200 crore.

This comes on the back of 10 companies successfully concluding their maiden public issues last month.

Overall, the Indian IPO market witnessed more than



Together, these companies are estimated to raise at least Rs 4,200 crore

44 issues that collected around Rs 35,000 crore in the current fiscal FY24 (till November). V Prashant Rao, Director & Head-ECM of Investment Banking at Anand Rathni Advisors, attributed several factors to the hectic IPO activity in the last few weeks, including strong post-listing returns

for recent public issues and robust macros.

"There have been several draft papers filings which indicate companies are gearing up to launch their IPOs in the coming quarters. Many of them, including the ones that have received Sebi clearance, are planning to launch before the general elections and hence you are seeing a flurry of IPOs getting launched," he said last month.

Of the five initial share sale offers scheduled for the week, the IPOs of affordable housing finance company India Shelter Finance and pencil maker DOMS Industries will be open for subscription during December 13-15. Both companies are looking to raise Rs 1,200 crore each. The public issue of Inox India will start on December 14.

Consistent inflows push small-cap funds AUM past ₹2L cr mark in Nov

PTI / New Delhi

Strong, incessant net flows and favourable market conditions propped up the assets base for the small-cap mutual fund category to cross Rs 2 lakh crore mark in November-end, a sharp surge of 69 per cent from a year earlier. On a month-on-month basis, the Assets Under Management (AUM) of the category grew 10 per cent to Rs 1.99 lakh crore, data with the AMFI showed.

Since the fourth quarter of 2019-20, the AUM for the category has seen a phenomenal rise, due to favourable market movement, along with record net inflows.

Small-cap funds attracted Rs 37,178 in this year (till November). This includes Rs 3,699 crore last month and a record fund infusion of Rs 4,495 crore in October.

On the other hand, the large-cap category saw a pull out of Rs 2,688 crore in the first 11 months of this year.

EPFO invested ₹27,105 cr in ETFs in Apr-Oct: Govt

PTI / New Delhi

Retirement fund body Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has invested Rs 27,105 crore in exchange-traded funds (ETFs) during the current fiscal till October, Parliament was informed on Monday.

EPFO had invested Rs 53,081 crore in the ETFs during the fiscal 2022-23, higher than Rs 43,568 crore in 2021-22, Minister of State for Labour and Employment Rameshwar Teli said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

The reply showed that the EPFO has invested Rs 27,105 crore in the ETFs so far in the current fiscal 2023-24 till October 2023. The body had invested Rs



14,983 crore in ETFs in 2016-17, Rs 24,790 crore in 2017-18, Rs 27,974 in 2018-19, Rs 31,501 crore in 2019-20 and Rs 32,071 in 2020-21, according to

the reply.

Teli explained to the House that the EPFO does not invest directly in individual stocks, including stocks of any blue-chip company.

EPFO invests in equity markets through ETFs, replicating BSE-Sensex and Nifty-50 indices, Teli said.

It has also invested from time to time in ETFs constructed specifically for disinvestment of shareholding of the central government in body corporates, he informed the House.

Govt focus on boosting electronic component manufacturing; new scheme in works: MeitY secy

PTI / New Delhi

The government's focus is now on boosting electronics component manufacturing in the country and new scheme for the same is in works, a senior government official said on Monday.

Speaking at the CII Electronic Summit, S Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), said that 99 per cent local mobile phone market is being met through domestic manufacturing, and for next phase of growth companies need to export by improving competitiveness and enhancing value addition.

"If our competitiveness needs to keep getting better then the challenge really is to not just rely on about 10 to 15 per cent of the value addition to assembly units

in the country but to look at what else we can do, how can we move up in the value chain?" Krishnan said. He said no one country is ever going to own the entire value chain and it's only going to be a portion of the value chain that India needs to target.

"Probably in India's case, the best case will probably be China which has about 40 to 45 per cent of the entire value chain, which is manufactured in China. We could possibly thinking of about somewhere in the same region of 35 to 40% of the entire value chain," Krishnan said. He said that the government is working on a second version of incentive scheme for electronics component - Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPACES).

'Probes against Sahara group cos will not be impeded by death of any person'

PTI / New Delhi

The government on Monday said the ongoing investigations by the SFIO as well as those under the companies law against certain Sahara Group companies will not be impeded by the death of any person.

Sahara Group chief Subrata Roy died due to a cardiorespiratory arrest after a prolonged illness on November 14.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha on Monday, Minister of State for Corporate Affairs Rao Inderjit Singh said the ministry had assigned probes into the affairs of three Sahara Group companies to the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) on October 31, 2018.

The companies are Sahara Housing Investment Corporation Ltd, Sahara Q Shop Unique Products Range Ltd, and Sahara Q Gold Mart Ltd.

'India planning to move from WPI to PPI in future'

PTI / New Delhi

India is planning to move from the Wholesale Price Index to Producer Price Index (PPI) in future as most of the G20 countries follow this practice, an official said.

The official said that the National Statistical Commission (NSC) is examining the working group report on the roadmap for introducing the PPI and their recommendations are awaited.

"It is with Statistical Commission, so we will wait for the panel recommendation," the official, who did not wish to be named, said.

When asked about the future plan on this, the government official said: "Initially, we will probably go with both (WPI and PPI) and after a few years, we may phase out WPI, because we are one of the few countries among



G20 which still have WPI. All other including China use PPI". The PPI has been discussed for the past several year. A working group was set up a few years back to determine the methodology and data requirements to move ahead.

In 2019, the government constituted a working group for revision of the current series of WPI that has 2011-12 as its base year. The task before the group was to suggest a new base year for WPI and suggest additions and deletions of commodities in the basket of goods whose prices are tracked to draw the index.

The working group was also empowered to recommend a roadmap for moving to the Producer Price Index (PPI) from WPI. PPI globally tracks price movements in both goods and services.

Gilts end lower tracking rise in US yields



INFORMIST / Mumbai

Prices of government bonds ended lower, tracking a rise in US Treasury yields, dealers said. Meanwhile, traders refrained from placing aggressive bets due to lack of significant domestic cues after the outcome of the Monetary Policy Committee's meeting on Friday.

On Friday, the domestic rate-setting panel kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.50%, and retained the 'withdrawal of accommodation' policy stance.

On Monday, the 10-year benchmark 7.18%, 2033 bond closed at 99.28 rupees, or 7.28% yield, against 99.37 rupees, or 7.27%, on Friday.

Mutual funds stepped up purchase of short-term papers at levels considered lucrative, which limited the losses, dealers speculated.

"They (mutual funds) would get flows during the quarter-end, so they would be deploying them in gilts," a dealer at a private bank said. "Also, when your 6 and 7-year papers give you the same yield as the 10-year, investors will definitely pick them up. The yields on the 7.10%, 2029 paper and 7.32%, 2030 paper ended at 7.28%, the same as the benchmark 10-year paper. A deficit in the banking system liquidity weighed on short-term bonds, which in turn keeps the yields on these papers high, dealers said.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Transition away from coal not happening in the near future: Govt

PTI / New Delhi

The transition away from coal is not happening in India in the foreseeable future, Parliament was informed on Monday.

Although India is pushing for renewable, non-fossil-based energy, but the share of coal in the energy basket is going to remain significant in the years ahead to ensure affordable energy availability, coal and mines minister Pralhad Joshi said.

"In India, the transition away from coal or Just Transition is not happening in the foreseeable future," the minister said.



Replying to a query in the Rajya Sabha, the minister said although, in due course, some mines may close down due to exhaustion of reserves, at the same time, many new coal blocks are being operationalised to meet the growing energy demand. "These mines are not only en-

suring affordability and energy security of the nation but also providing new additional opportunities for new employment and redeployment of workers in new mines from the to-be-closed mines to ensure better livelihood and also generate indirect employment opportunities in coal regions," he said.

"The World Bank is implementing a technical assistance project...This is intended for the study of already closed, abandoned and to be closed mines due to resource exhaustion and geo-spatial mapping of the area," he added.

≡ BIZ BULLETIN

DLF Chief Financial Officer Anand resigns
Realty firm DLF on Monday said its Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Vivek Anand has resigned from the company. He will continue as CFO till February next year. DLF MD Ashok Kumar Tyagi, who has the overall responsibility for all corporate functions including Finance, will now have oversight of the Group Finance, IT, and secretarial functions in addition to his current responsibilities as Managing Director, the company said in a regulatory filing.

Tata Motors ties up with 4 charge point operators
Tata Passenger Electric Mobility (TPEM) on Monday said it has tied up with charge point operators Chargezone, Glida, Statiq, and Zeon. The company, a part of Tata Motors, has inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the four charge point operators (CPOs). TPEM will actively assist the four CPOs in installing chargers at locations most frequented by its EV owners and share insights on how the chargers are being used to help understand and enhance customer experience, the Mumbai-based auto major said in a statement.

M&M auto output up 13.4% to 69,875 units in Nov
Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd's automobile production jumped 13.4% on year to 69,875 units in November, as per a report by the company today. The automotive manufacturing company's production for the month included 39,693 utility vehicles, 23,068 commercial vehicles and 7,114 three-wheelers. Among utility vehicles, the company manufactured 12,079 units of Scorpio, 9,328 units of Bolero, and 8,106 units of XUV700.

CRISIL sees 2023-24 sugar output falling at 3-4%
India's sugar production in the 2023-24 (Oct-Sep) season is seen falling at a slower pace of 3-4% against 10-11% expected earlier due to the government's decision to stop production of ethanol from sugarcane juice and sugar syrup, says CRISIL in a report. Owing to the restriction, sugar supply is now expected to rise by 2.0 mln-2.5 mln tn in the current production year ending September, CRISIL said. Ethanol production, on the other hand, is estimated to fall 20%, which could lead to a reduction in the ethanol blending rate to less than 10% in the ethanol supply year 2023-24 (Nov-Oct) against 12% last year, according to the report.

SpiceJet board adjourns meeting; to discuss funding plans today

Crisis-hit SpiceJet's board of directors will continue to discuss fundraising plans on Tuesday after it could only partially complete the agenda items on Monday.
On Monday, the no-frills airline's shares touched a 52-week high and ended with more than 10 per cent gains on the BSE as investors were enthused by funding plans and the proposal to list the company's securities on the National Stock Exchange (NSE).
In a regulatory filing on Monday, SpiceJet said that in order to reach a wider investor base, "the company shall soon be listing its securities on NSE".

Ola Electric aims to raise ₹5,800 crore via IPO, to file DRHP

Homegrown electric two-wheeler manufacturer Ola Electric aims to raise nearly Rs 5,800 crore through an Initial Public Offering (IPO) and is set to file its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) by December 20, media reports said on Monday. According to the reports, the company is looking to list at a valuation of more than \$7 billion by early 2024. Through the IPO, Ola Electric plans to expand its EV business and establish a lithium-ion cell manufacturing facility, the reports said.
The company started sales in December 2021 and has sold over 353,000 units to date. Meanwhile, Bhavishh Agarwal-driven Ola Electric's net loss nearly doubled to Rs 1,472 crore in FY23, from Rs 784.1 crore in the previous fiscal year, as expenses surged significantly. The electric vehicle company reported an EBITDA loss of Rs 1,318 crore as its total expenses jumped to Rs 3,383 crore, in comparison to Rs 1,240 crore in FY22.

ADANI GROUP EBITDA JUMPS 47% TO RECORD ₹43K CR IN H1

Adani Group on Monday said pre-tax profit or EBITDA of its portfolio companies that span from apples to airports jumped 47 per cent in the first half of the current fiscal year to Rs 43,688 crore on growth across businesses.
"Core infrastructure businesses that provide a high degree of predictability, stability and multi-decadal visibility contributed 86 per cent of total EBITDA," it said in a statement.
Trailing 12-month EBITDA of Rs 71,253 crore (USD 8.6 billion) is around 3x of FY19 (April 2018 to March 2019 fiscal year) EBITDA.
"The integrated business portfolio, which focuses on fortifying India's infrastructure development, has delivered a strong performance across all its businesses. The substantial cash flows from these businesses lay the foundation for sustained future growth," the statement said.
The group had the highest-ever cash bal-

VC Sauce.vc acquires 3% stake in GRM Foodkraft

Basmati rice company GRM Overseas on Monday said it has sold more than 3 per cent stake in its subsidiary GRM Foodkraft to venture capital fund Sauce.vc for an undisclosed amount.
Sauce has also acquired an additional 1 per cent stake from other shareholders in GRM Foodkraft, which focuses on domestic foods business.
Atul Garg, MD, GRM Overseas Ltd, said the company has roped in Sauce.vc as a strategic investor. "We look forward to deriving substantial advantages from the wealth of experience and a demonstrable history of creating new-age brands by the Sauce team. Our goal is to evolve our brands into distinguished names in their respective product categories," he said.
The company would intend to work with the Sauce team to identify emerging areas for launching new brands in packaged foods and to explore deepening its presence in digital channels.



In an evening filing to the BSE, SpiceJet said its board on Monday "could only partially complete the agenda items and the meeting has now been adjourned to December 12, 2023 (Tuesday)".
Apart from options for raising fresh capital through the issue of equity shares and/or convertible securities on a preferential basis, the board will also consider the September quarter results, as per the filing.

'FMCG cos must shift focus to volumes from profitability'

Fast-moving consumer goods companies need to shift their focus to volume growth from profitability, said Abheek Singh, managing director of Boston Consulting Group, as the sector is unlikely to see significant improvement in profit margin going ahead.
The companies' earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation margin improved from an average of 15% from 2008 to 2016, to an average of 20% from 2017 to 2023, said Singh at the CII's National FMCG summit on Monday.
In comparison, FMCG sector's volume growth lagged India's GDP growth. While the sector's volumes grew 3.4% annually, India's GDP grew at 5.9% during 2007-2023, said Singh. In the recent past, the volume growth was impacted by factors such as Goods and Services Tax, demonetisation and the COVID-19 pandemic, he said. To boost volumes, the companies will have to work on category and product development, and gaining further market share, said Singh.
Saugata Gupta, MD & CEO, Marico India, upheld the importance of Volumes for the FMCG industry, while informing that there are more consumers to consume and there exists a huge opportunity emerging due to rising rural affluence.
Varun Berry, Executive Vice Chairman and MD Britannia Industries urged the FMCG players to rethink to reignite growth and be smart marketers and put more focus on speed, agility and adaptability.



operationalised the C-PACE on May 1, 2023, to facilitate and expedite the applications filed for voluntary exit under the provisions of Section 248 (2) of the Companies Act, 2013.



ances of Rs 45,895 crore (USD 5.5 billion) at the end of September.
Headquartered in Ahmedabad, the Adani portfolio is the largest and fastest-growing portfolio of diversified businesses in India with interests in logistics (seaports, airports, logistics, shipping and rail), resources, power generation and distribution, renewable energy, gas and infrastructure, agro

GST evasion of ₹345 cr detected against lottery distributors till Nov 2023: FinMin

A total of 12 cases of GST evasion involving Rs 345 crore have been detected against lottery distributors since July 2017, Parliament was informed on Monday.
Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad in a written reply to the Lok Sabha said Rs 622 crore, including interest and penalty, have been recovered from lottery distributors from July 2017 till November 2023.
"Twelve cases involving GST evasion of Rs 344.57 crore have been detected against lottery distributors and Rs 621.56 crore (including interest and penalty) has been recovered/realized from July 2017 to till November 2023," Karad said.
Karad further said the Finance Ministry had received a reference from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for comments regarding disbursement of prize amount of lotteries through formal banking channel.

Dixon subsidiary Padget Electronics to make Lenovo's laptops, notebooks in India

Electronic manufacturing services company Dixon Technologies subsidiary Padget Electronics has bagged a contract from Lenovo to make its laptops and notebooks in India, a regulatory filing said on Monday.
Padget Electronics is among 27 companies that have qualified for the production-linked incentive scheme.
"We wish to inform that Padget Electronics Pvt Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Dixon Technologies (India) Ltd, has been awarded manufacturing contract by Lenovo for manufacturing of IT Hardware products i.e. laptops and notebooks under Production Linked Incentive (PLI) 2.0 Scheme, subject to signing of definitive agreement in due course," Dixon said in the filing.
Lenovo was already manufacturing some of its laptops and notebooks in Chennai.
However, the company is not in the list of companies that are eligible for PLI 2.0.
"It gives us an immense pleasure to partner with iconic brand Lenovo for manufacturing IT Hardware products under the IT hardware PLI 2.0 Scheme. This will give a strong impetus to India's manufacturing competitiveness," Dixon Technologies (India) Vice-Chairman and Managing Director Atul B Lall said.
He said Lenovo will bring in the global knowhow and processes to manufacture IT hardware products.
"We are confident that this partnership will also scale up localisation and creation of component ecosystem and employment opportunities in India," Lall said.



States' finances improved in FY23, and there is a need to look at asset monetisation to help garner non-tax revenues, a Reserve Bank report said on Monday.
In the report on state budgets, which is done annually, the Reserve Bank said road, transport and power sectors hold considerable potential where the states can undertake asset sales.
"States need to scale up their

MONEY

(commodities, edible oil, food products, cold storage and grain silos), real estate, public transport infrastructure, consumer finance and defence.
"The incubation continues to be a success story with airports, green hydrogen and other incubating assets emerging strongly and now contributing near 8% of the portfolio EBITDA," said Jugeshinder (Robbie) Singh, Group CFO.
"The Portfolio has withstood the test of time and has a track record of tremendous growth in spite of macroeconomic and other challenges." In the first half of fiscal year 2024, the Adani portfolio of companies demonstrated robust financial performance while further enhancing its strong credit profile.
During the April-September period, the portfolio level EBITDA stood at Rs 43,688 crore (USD 5.3 billion), up 47 per cent year-on-year. This growth outpaced the portfolio's historical five-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) trajectory of 26.3 per cent.

"Comments in this regard have been sent to MHA. Using formal banking channel for any kind of transaction, including disbursement of lottery prize, is helpful in mitigating the associated money laundering/terrorist financing/proliferation funding risks in view of the robust banking system and effective regulation/supervision of the regulated entities," Karad said.
Under income tax law, a 30 per cent Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) is to be levied on winnings from lotteries, game shows, card games, online games provided the earnings exceed Rs 10,000 in a fiscal.

Tata Power, IOC in pact to roll out over 500 EV charging points

Tata Power on Monday said its subsidiary Tata Power EV Charging Solutions has inked an agreement with India Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) to install more than 500 fast and ultra-fast electric vehicle (EV) charging points across India. Tata Power will install EV charging points across multiple IOCL retail outlets, a statement said.
Tata Power EV Charging Solutions Limited (TPEVCSL), a Tata Power Group Company and one of the leading EV Charging solutions providers, and the IOCL have signed a MoU to roll out fast and ultra-fast electric vehicle (EV) charging points across India.
These EV charging points will be installed in major cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Pune, and Kochi, as well as across major highways such as the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, Salem-Kochi Highway, Guntur-Chennai Highway and the Golden Quadrilateral.



initiatives for asset monetisation in order to increase non-tax revenue. The monetisation of assets unlocks their value, eliminates their holding cost and enables

Kinetic Green launches e-scooter ZULU, targets big play in 2, 3-wheeler market

Electric vehicle maker Kinetic Green on Monday said it is looking to play big in the electric two and three-wheeler space as it rolled out its all-new e-scooter ZULU in the domestic market.
The Made-in-India Fame-II compliant high-speed electric scooter comes at an introductory price starting from Rs 94,990 (ex-

showroom, Mumbai), the company said. The Pune-based company also announced a new brand identity as part of its commitment to sustainable mobility plans.
The all-new Zulu will offer "Battery as a Subscription" plans and a fast-charging, long-life lithium-ion battery with oil-cooled immersion technology, the company said. Kinetic Green aims big with the launch of all-

Decoding IPO Buzz: What Investors Need to Know

With several companies launching IPOs in Dec, discover what investors should keep in mind in the IPO market

In India, the allure of the stock market continues to grow, and recent times have seen the stock market provide not only good profits but also witnessed individuals losing money at times. This year, the IPO market is once again in the limelight, with many companies opting to go public. This surge can be attributed to several factors, including a robust economic environment, increased confidence among investors, and a growing appetite for risk among both retail and institutional investors.
In this article, we will delve into the IPO market extensively, exploring potential trends in the upcoming IPO market and highlighting crucial considerations for investors.

What's Happening?
According to the Hindustan Times, the market saw seven new IPOs in November 2023, featuring names like Tata Technologies and IREDA. These IPOs showcased a strong performance in the stock market. According to the Economic Times, Tata Technologies had a bumper listing, with investors experiencing nearly a threefold increase in their investment on the first day. Following this, IREDA and Gandhar Oil saw increases of 100% and 61%, respectively, from their issue prices. Investors are showing enthusiasm to capitalise on potential profits with the introduction of new companies in stock exchanges.

Teji Mandi (TM Investment Technologies Pvt Ltd) is a SEBI registered Research Analyst (RA). Information in this article should not be construed as investment advice. Please visit www.tejimandi.com to know more.



Upcoming IPOs in the Last Month of the Year

As mentioned in the Mint, as per EY's report, India has emerged as a global leader in the number of year-to-date IPOs in 2023. In the third quarter of 2023, the Indian primary market witnessed 21 IPOs, compared to just four in the same quarter of 2022. The total funds raised during the third quarter of 2023 amounted to US \$1,770 million, indicating a staggering 376% growth compared to the US \$372 million raised in the third quarter of 2022.
After an active November, several new IPOs are poised to launch in both the mainboard and SME segments in December. Companies like DOMS Industries Limited, Muthoot Microfin Limited, Accent Microcell Limited, SJ Logistics, and India Shelter Finance are among those preparing to go public.

What Do Experts Say?
According to experts, investors should evaluate companies' business models, financial positions, and growth prospects before making investment decisions. Additionally, keeping a vigilant eye on valuation metrics and market trends can help investors navigate the fine line between enthusiasm and overconfidence.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

India to strive for consensus based 'declaration document' on approach to AI, risk mitigation

The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit to be inaugurated by Prime Minister on Tuesday will see intense deliberations on this new technology and work towards consensus-based 'declaration document' on approach to AI opportunities and risk mitigation, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Monday.
India – which has always championed democratisation of technology for masses – will moot use of AI for sustainable agriculture as well as a DPI-like collaborative structure for harnessing the power of artificial intelligence, Vaishnaw, who is the Minister of IT and Electronics, said.
Vaishnaw further said that the world's view on AI is almost converging, with global recognition and awareness around the dangers as well as transformative potential of this new technology.



The GPAI – a multistakeholder initiative focused on nuances of AI – has 28 member countries and the European Union (EU).
As one of the founding members of GPAI in 2020, and the lead chair for GPAI in 2024, India is hosting the annual GPAI Summit in New Delhi from December 12-14, 2023. The discussions will be around responsible AI, and the event will see stakeholders brainstorming on tapping opportunities and benefits of AI.
"The world is looking up to India. Today every major country wants to join hands with India for co-creation and development of technology," Vaishnaw told reporters.

'States should look at asset sales in infra sector to bolster revenues'

scarce public funds to be deployed into new projects, thus fast-tracking new infrastructure creation," the report recommended. States possess a sizeable infrastructure asset base with significant potential in roads, transport and power sectors, which can be looked at, the report said.
It recommended mobilising revenues by undertaking a comprehensive review of unutilised land assets and converting them into revenue-generating industrial estates or doing an outright sale. The RBI report also said that in the case of non-operational public sector undertakings (PSUs), states may expedite their liquidation to curb losses.
States can also look at shoring up the non-tax revenues through revising user charges on electricity, water and other public services, royalties and premiums from mining, and better financial management of their PSUs, the report said.

Robertet Group acquires Sonarome for 45-65 mn euros

French fragrance company Robertet Group has acquired Bengaluru-based flavour company Sonarome for an estimated 45-65 million euros (Rs 404-584 crore). Listed on Paris Stock Exchange, the family-owned business Robertet Group is one of the leading companies in natural raw materials used for the creation of flavours, fragrances and active ingredients for health and beauty products.
"We have completed the acquisition of Sonarome on December 1. It's a debt finance acquisition," Group CEO Jerome Bruhat told PTI.
The company has acquired shares from two major shareholders – IIF and Gulhati family. The company has acquired the majority shares of IIF, while partial shares from the Gulhati family, he said.
"We have an agreement with the Gulhati family to purchase the rest of the shares for a period of eight years to come," he added.



new e-scooter ZULU, the company said.

CENTRE FOR PROCESSING ACCELERATED CORPORATE EXIT

Govt says over 7,700 cos voluntarily exited biz since setting up C-PACE

More than 7,700 companies have voluntarily closed down their business in the country since the setting up of the Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit (C-PACE) in May this year, and the time taken for voluntary exit has come down to around 110 days, according to the government.
The corporate affairs ministry



The applications for voluntary closure under C-PACE are processed in a centralised manner for an efficient and uniform outcome, Minister of State for Corporate Affairs Rao Inderjit Singh said on Monday.
"Since the setting up of C-PACE, 7,721 companies have been struck off till 05.12.2023, under section 248(2) of the Act... the time taken under C-PACE for voluntary exit has reduced to around 110 days

during the current year," he said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.
In a separate written reply, Singh said the CSR-related disclosures are filed by the companies in the MCA 21 portal.
He said that whenever a violation of CSR provisions is reported, action against such non-compliant companies is initiated as per provisions of the Companies Act after due examination of records and following due process of law.

53 Chinese foreign companies established place of biz in India: Corp affairs ministry

The corporate affairs ministry on Monday said there are 53 Chinese foreign companies that have established a place of business in India, but there is no specific data maintained about details of business activities related to providing loans through apps by these firms. A foreign company (incorporated outside India) can establish a place of business in the country after complying with the requirements of RBI regulations and other sectoral requirements, wherever applicable. Within 30 days of the establishment of such an office, it has to seek registration with the Registrar of Companies (RoC) (Delhi & Haryana) under Section 380 of the Companies Act, 2013.

CORPORATE GALLERY

BHEL wins Governance Now PSU IT Awards 2023



For dedicated innovation and excellence in the field of information technology, BHEL has been adjudged the winner of three

Governance Now PSU IT Awards for the year 2023. The Governance Now PSU IT Awards are given to honour the efforts and excellence of PSUs in IT. The company was unanimously selected for the awards in the categories of Cybersecurity and Data Protection, IT Innovation and Excellence in Software Development, by an independent jury. The awards were received by J.P. Srivastava, Director (E, R&D) and Director (Finance) – Addl. Charge along with other senior officials of the company from Dr. Vikram Singh, Former DGP, Uttar Pradesh, at a function held in New Delhi.

SCOPE, ICSI sign MoU on Strengthening Corporate Governance



A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) and the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) for a knowledge partnership so as to enhance capacities

and capabilities to align corporate strategy and decision-making with highest benchmarks of corporate governance. The MoU was signed between Atul Sobti, DG, SCOPE and CS Manish Gupta, President, ICSI in the presence of B. K. Sokhey, Director (F), NBCC and Chairperson, SCOPE Committee of Financial Management; CS Ashish Mohan, Secretary, ICSI along with senior officials of ICSI and SCOPE.

SIMATS Engineering UBA Volunteers at Chembarambakkam High School



In a commendable initiative, the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) team from SIMATS Engineering of Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences – SIMATS University visited Chembarambakkam village High School to raise awareness about environmental pollution and

protection, emphasizing the importance of saying no to plastics and sustainability. Enthusiastic participation marked the awareness program, where Saveetha students engaged with classes 6 to 9, fostering discussions on environmental issues and solutions, with a resounding message to recycle and reuse plastics. A total of 180 students benefited from the informative session. SIMATS Engineering is an active participant and volunteer of the Ministry of Human Resource Development's flagship program Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA), which aspires to link higher educational institutions with a set of villages.

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Dr Suresh Mehrotra



Post of Chairman, TRAI re-advertised



The Government of India has re-advertised the post of Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). Those who have applied earlier need not apply fresh for this post lying vacant since October 1, 2023. However, TRAI Member Meenakshi Gupta is holding additional charge of Chairman.

Empowered Committee constituted to give environmental clearance



Chairman RERA Odisha Siddhant Das has been appointed Chairman of the Central Empowered Committee to give environmental clearance to projects. Ms Banumathi G, AIGF, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, is made the Member Secretary of the apex committee, while DG Forests Chadra Prakash Goyal, Suil Limaye and J R Bhatt will be its Members. The committee was earlier under the Supreme Court. Now the Central Government has been authorized by the SC to make the appointments.

Entire Rahul brigade lost elections?

It is said that in the recently held Vidhan Sabha elections, Rahul Gandhi team members lost elections. The youth leaders used to claim members of the Rahul Gandhi Brigade.

Why delay in empanelment of 1995 batch IPS?

Delay in the empanelment of 1995 batch IPS officers to the rank of ADG in the Government of India has raised many an eyebrow. Meeting for empanelment was reportedly held on November 19 but still result is awaited.

18 IDAS officers granted NFU from Jan 1

The CGDA has approved the placement of 18 IDAS officers of JAG in the NFU Grade with effect from January 1, 2024. They are: Amulya KG, Bhawini Tripathi, Vidhu Garg, Sahil Goyal, Sanjeev Kumar, Swapnil Agrawal, Tabish Shams, Karake Rahul Eknath, Vikas Ojha, K. Sangeeta, Subhash Kumar, Sonal Mehlaawat, Shurveer Singh Sankhla, Sameer Narantharya, Sumit Gajbihi, Manjeet Kaur, B. Bala Jawahar and M K Touthang.

Dy DG post for UIDAI advertised

Unique Identification Authority of Indian (UIDAI), Headquarters, New Delhi has invited applications for the post of Deputy Director General (JS equivalent) on deputation basis. The last date to apply is January 8, 2024.

Soumitra Mondal quits Indian Telecom Service

Soumitra Mondal has resigned from the Indian Telecom Service (ITS) with effect from January 17, 2024. He is presently posted as Director in the department.



Will there be early Lok Sabha polls?

Buzz is that Lok Sabha polls will be announced soon after the inauguration of the Ayodhya Temple. Now elections may be held in March instead of May. Change of dates of the CBSC examinations is said to be an indication.

Dattatray Padsalgikar joins as Director, Emeritus, MIA, Pune

Dattatray Padsalgikar has taken over the charge as Director Emeritus, Maharashtra Intelligence Academy (MIA), Pune in Maharashtra. He is a 1982 batch retired IPS officer.

Search for successor to Pushp Kumar Joshi as CMD, HPCL begins

The Government of India has started searching for a candidate for the post of Chairman-cum-Managing Director, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL).

Interviews for CMD, IRCON International Ltd on Dec 19

The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) is holding interviews for the post of Chairman-cum-Managing Director, IRCON International Limited on December 19, 2023.

Yogesh Mishra again attending interview for CMD, IRCON

Yogesh Mishra, whose tenure as CMD, IRCON, was curtailed, is reported to be attending interview again for the post of Chairman-cum-Managing Director, IRCON International Ltd.

Rahul Bhagat to be important in new regime?

It is said that Rahul Bhagat is going to be the important functionary in the Vishnu Dev Sai regime. He is 2005 batch IPS officer of Chhattisgarh cadre.

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Manipur violence: SC junks PIL for new probe panel

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a fresh PIL seeking a direction to the Centre to intervene and restore law and order in ethnic violence-hit Manipur, besides setting up a panel of experts to prepare a report on the underlying

causes for the crisis and suggest remedial measures. A bench led by CJI Chandrachud took note of the submissions of advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for the PIL petitioners, and said a committee was already looking into the issue.



MOHAN YADAV: A TOUGH TASK MASTER

NIRUKT BHARGAVA / UJJAIN

The new Madhya Pradesh CM, Mohan Yadav, played a pivotal role in hosting the first-ever meeting of Madhya Pradesh cabinet in Ujjain ahead of the inauguration of 'Shri Mahakal Mahalok' by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The cabinet meeting was held on September 27, 2022, and interestingly, the portrait of Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga was kept as the presiding officer!



Yadav's motive was to re-establish the past glory of Ujjain which was the capital of the country during the era of King Vikramaditya. Now that he is the CM, people of Ujjain are expecting that he would be able to fulfil his commitment.

FROM STUDENT LEADER TO MLA, THEN MINISTER

An ABVP activist, 58-year-old Mohan Yadav started his political career at Madhav Science College, Ujjain where he got elected to the post of joint secretary of students union. Since then, he has never looked back. He held various posts in ABVP from the local to national level. He is among the few persons who got the highest level of training as an RSS worker at Nagpur. He also worked in various capacities in BJYM and BJP. In 2004, he was made chairman of Ujjain Development Authority and then chairman of MP State Tourism Development Corporation. He was elected as an MLA for the first time in 2013 from Ujjain South constituency which he again represented in 2018 and became higher education minister. He created history by making a hat-trick by registering victory from the same constituency in the 2023 elections.

WAS BLUE-EYED BOY OF RSS FUNCTIONARY

Yadav wakes up at around 5.30 am every day and religiously goes for morning walks, cycling and yoga. His zest for knowledge can be gauged from the fact that he did his graduation in science, then post-graduation and PhD in political science and later completed MBA and LLB from Vikram University, Ujjain. A builder by profession, Yadav became blue-eyed boy of one of the top RSS functionaries, Suresh Soni, when he was asked to establish a modern observatory at a small village at Dongla under Mahidpur subdivision of Ujjain district.

RIPPLES Govt defends NMC logo change

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Monday defended the change in the National Medical Commission's logo to feature Dhanwantari — the physicians of the Gods in Hindu mythology — instead of a secular emblem, saying it was part of India's heritage and everyone must feel proud of it. When the TMC's Santanu Sen raised the issue of the change in the logo through a Zero Hour mention in the Rajya Sabha, Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said Dhanwantari is a symbol of Indian medical science. "(It was) already a part of the (Commission's) logo and just some colour has been added and nothing more," he said.

Tunnel at Hindan Air Base?

GHAZIABAD: A 4-foot deep pit was found on Sunday under the boundary wall of the Hindan Air Base in Ghaziabad, raising serious security concerns that a suspected attempt was made to dig a tunnel at the strategically important air force base located nearly 10km from Delhi, NDTV reported on Monday. Police reached the spot after locals informed them. A huge crowd gathered near the spot to see the pit. An Indian Air Force team filled the pit with mud.

SHAH TEARS INTO OPPN

Says inko nahi samjha sakta

PTI / NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday moved the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023 in Rajya Sabha. During the discussion on the bill in the Upper House of Parliament, Union Home Minister Amit Shah mentioned the verdict of the Supreme Court upholding the abrogation of Article 370 and called it a big defeat of Opposition parties.

"Today, the decision by the Supreme Court on Article 370 has also come. Still, they (Congress) say they don't accept this and that Article 370 was abrogated wrongfully. I can't explain to them what the reality is... Article 370 boosted separatism and separatism led to the rise of terrorism. One wrong decision can be taken but when history and time prove that the decision is wrong, one should come back towards the interest of the nation. I still say, come back otherwise there won't remain even how many



are left now (MPs elected to the House). If you want to stick to this decision even today, the public is watching—there will be a face off in 2024 and PM Modi will become the PM for the third time," Shah said during discussions in Rajya Sabha.

Speaking on the two bills related to J&K, Shah said the Union Government has reserved 24 seats in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir as the region is ours. "...earlier there were 37 seats in Jammu, now

IN PARLIAMENT

SIDELIGHTS

- MEA should put up strong case with US against Pannun: Cong MP
- India's bio-economy grew from \$10bn to \$80bn in 8 years: Mandaviya
- No proposal on reservation in promotion for OBCs in central edu institutions: MoE
- ₹9,790 crore loans disbursed to street vendors under PM SVANidhi scheme, RS told
- Nine more airports to come up in UP in 2 years: Scindia

after the new delimitation commission, there are 43 seats. Earlier there were 46 in Kashmir, now there are 47 and in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir, 24 seats have been reserved since PoK is ours..." he said.

'Nehru's mistakes at root of Kashmir issue' "There are other states with more Muslim population than Kashmir. Then why only J&K was suffering from terrorism? It was because Ar-

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370

BEMISAL FOR BUOYANT BJP

Scenes were different on Monday as several organisations held events to celebrate SC ruling

Even as the Supreme Court has delivered its verdict on the validity of the abrogation of the Article 370 of the Constitution and the top court on Monday upheld the Centre's decision to scrap Article 370, which granted a special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir... *FPJ* takes a look at the changes before and after the abrogation.

On 5 August 2019, the Centre had abrogated Article 370, which ended the special status provided to J&K. At the time, the erstwhile state was also bifurcated into two Union Territories — Jammu and Kashmir (with legislature) and Ladakh (without legislature).

Over the last four years, J&K has undergone several changes. Let's take a closer look.

THE MAJOR CHANGES

With the scrapping of Article 370, Article 35A also came to an end.

Article 35A defined the erstwhile state's "permanent residents" and accorded them special rights and privileges. It also prevented residents of other Indian states from buying and selling immovable properties in J&K.

In October 2020, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) amended 14 laws of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and repealed 12 others. One of the repealed laws, the Jammu and Kashmir Alienation of Land Act of 1938, barred the transfer of land to anyone who was not a state subject, according to media reports.

State subject referred to permanent resident certificate holders of J&K.

After the 2019 abrogation, J&K does not have a separate flag, Constitution, or anthem. The residents of the then state lost their dual citizenship and have since possessed only citizenship of India.

The Centre introduced the domicile clause through the J&K Reorganisation (adaptation of state laws) Order 2020, revising residence and recruitment rules. Under the 2020 order, any individual who has lived in J&K for 15 years, or has studied for seven years and given Class 10th/12th exam at an educational institution located in the UT, is eligible for a domicile certificate, reported in Indian



Express. This replaced the previously issued permanent resident certificates.

All central laws became applicable in J&K after Article 370 was revoked. And thus, the Ranbir Penal Code gave way to the Indian Penal Code.

The prosecution wing was separated from the executive police in J&K in November 2019.

SECURITY SCENARIO

Active militancy has abated in J&K since the abrogation of Article 370.

The number of active militants has plunged from 250 at the end of 2019 to "little above 100" towards the end of 2022, *Scroll* reported citing official figures.

The number of locals recruited by militants has also come down. From 206 in 2018 and 143 in 2019, only 100 Kashmiri youth joined militant groups last year. Less than 12 locals joined militancy till July end of this year, reported *Deccan Herald* (DH).

A total of 750 militants have been killed by security forces in the UT over the last four years, as per *Scroll*. From 1 January to August 5, this year, 35 militants were neutralised by security forces in several operations. Last year, 186 militants, including 56 foreigners, were killed, said *DH*.

WHAT ELSE...

There is no J&K cadre now. As Jammu and Kashmir was reorganised as a Union Territory in 2019, the J&K cadre was merged with the Arunachal Pradesh-

Goa-Mizoram and Union Territory (AG-MUT) cadre of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

J&K has set up a State Investigation Agency (SIA) in the recent years for "coordinating with the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other central agencies and shall take such other measures as may be necessary for speedy and effective investigation and prosecution of terrorism related cases," as per the *Indian Express* report.

With the state Human Rights Commission, the state Women's Commission and the state Information Commission becoming defunct, J&K residents have to now petition national-level commissions.

In October 2020, District Development Councils (DDCs) were created through an amendment to the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989. The members of the councils are directly elected by voters in the Union Territory. They were formed as a new unit of governance in the UT, with each district sending 14 elected members (in rural areas) to the DDC.

J&K has also seen a boom in tourism as well as investments in recent years. As per *DH*, the erstwhile state had got private investments worth ₹14,000 crore since Independence.

However, following the abrogation and introduction of a new Industrial Development Scheme, the Union Territory has received investment proposals to the tune of ₹81,122 crore in the last two years alone.

—FPJ News Service

Govt withdraws 3 new criminal laws bills

SHAH SAID.

The court's order vindicated the government's stand, he said Shah. Even so, the Congress, he said, was not happy with the court's verdict.

The Congress, he said, had committed mistakes for 40 years. "They expect that the mistakes of 40 years will be rectified in Modi's four years. But they are right, one should always aim high," he said.

He blamed Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first Prime Minister, for Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. Meanwhile, the External Affairs Ministry in the Lok Sabha corrected the name of the minister who replied to a Parliament question on the designation of Hamas on Dec 8.

The MEA on Dec 10 said the unstarred question "needs a technical correction in terms of reflecting V. Muralidharan as the MoS replying to the Parliament question". Further, 12,000 newly-manufactured train coaches have digital display boards containing information such as forthcoming station, destination and running status, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has said.

The three bills were then referred to a select committee of Parliament for detailed evaluation and the panel was asked to submit its report within three months.

During the introduction of the bills in Lok Sabha, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the focus of these bills is to provide justice, not punishment.

NATION

'Bolster CBI to probe states sans approval'

PTI / NEW DELHI

Asserting that withdrawal of 'general consent' by some states has led to severe limitations in the CBI's powers to investigate crucial cases, a Parliamentary panel on Monday said there was a dire need to enact a new law and give wider powers to the federal agency so that it can probe cases without a "state's consent and interference".

At the same time, the panel said some safeguards should also be laid down to ensure objectivity and impartiality in the functioning of CBI so that the states also don't feel discriminated against.

As per the provisions of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, which governs the functioning of the CBI, the consent of the state government is a pre-requisite for any investigation by CBI. Nine states have withdrawn the general consent to the CBI for investigating cases, according to a report tabled by the panel in Parliament on Monday.

State governments have granted general consent to the CBI for investigation in a "specified class of offences against specified categories

of persons", according to the provision of Section 6 of the DSPE Act.

Implement mobile video conferencing in HCs ASAP

Noting that the facility of mobile video conference to help litigants in remote areas has been implemented in only two of the 25 high courts, a parliamentary panel has recommended that it be put in place in the remaining states at the earliest.

In its earlier report, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Personnel had said it opined the judiciary should consider such innovative solutions as launching mobile video conferencing facilities for the benefit of advocates and people living in remote areas. Telangana and Himachal HCs have implemented the recommendation.

Worshipping at ASI sites?

A parliamentary panel has recommended to the Centre to explore the possibility of permitting worship at ASI-protected monuments having "religious significance" if it can be established that this would not have a detrimental effect on their conservation.



Security men keep a vigil in Srinagar on Monday —SAJAD HAMEED

AND LIFE CONTINUES

There were celebrations across Jammu on Monday but life went on as usual in Srinagar and other district headquarters in the Kashmir Valley as the Supreme Court upheld the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370 and reorganise Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories.

Shops and business establishments opened in Srinagar and elsewhere as per usual while public transport also plied normally, in sharp contrast to what was witnessed on August 5, 2019, when the Centre moved to scrap Jammu and Kashmir's special status. There was radio silence from Kashmir that day.

In the summer capital, civic workers were seen going about their work in the morning and tourists were busy clicking photographs at Lal Chowk in the city centre as taxis that ply between Srinagar and Jammu queued up at the tourist reception centre.

Shop owners along the up-market Residency Road were seen lifting the shutters, un-mindful of the fact that the top court of the country was scheduled to deliver the verdict on petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370.

Muntazir Muzamil, a trader, said, "The verdict has been pronounced by the Supreme Court and there's no point debating it now. For the past 35 years, Kashmir has seen only violence... now, we are hopeful that the pace of development happening in Kashmir won't slow down." "The situation should remain peaceful. What else can a common man expect? We have to think of our future. Whatever happened has happened, it can't be undone now," he added.

Although there were more uniformed men on the streets in the morning, the numbers were not large enough to rouse any apprehensions. There were no concertina wires or special barricades erected on the roads to check the movement of people.

In Jammu, organisations like the Dogra Front Shiv



I have been put under house arrest since 8 am. Why don't you report it? Please ask honourable LG (Manoj Sinha) why is he not telling the truth... I can't talk about anything while I am imprisoned in my own house. Police are saying that everything is normal. Then why have they locked us. Dear Mr LG these chains that have been put on my gate have not been put by me so why are you denying what your police force has done? It's also possible you don't even know what your police are doing. Which one is it? Are you being dishonest or is your police acting independently of you?

—Omar Abdullah

Omar has been locked up in his house. Democracy? —NC

Even before the SC judgment is pronounced, police have sealed the doors of the residence of Mehbooba and put her under illegal house arrest. —PDP

Sena, Rashtriya Bajrang Dal and the West Pakistan Refugees hosted events to celebrate the top court verdict.

Led by DFSS chairman Ashok Gupta, scores of DFSS activists carrying national flags and pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi gathered in the Rani Park area. They danced to the beat of drums and dholaks and distributed sweets.

Gupta said, "It was the last nail in the coffin of Article 370. We are pleased with the decision. Article 370 is now conclusively laid to rest."

Rashtriya Bajrang Dal organised several events also. —FPJ News Service

Bihar Global Investors' meet from Dec 13

DHEERAJ KUMAR / PATNA

Bihar industries department will organise a 2-day Global Investors Summit, "Bihar Business Connect 2023" from Dec 13 as over 600 domestic and foreign entrepreneurs are expected to take part in it.

Additional chief secretary of the industries department Sandeep Poundrik said investor meets were held in Delhi, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Tiruppur and Kolkata to inform investors about the facilities available in Bihar and the

state's industrial policies. Similar investor meets were conducted in the US, Bangladesh, UAE, Taiwan and Japan. The department has gone into overdrive to change the perception of big business houses about Bihar to attract private investments.

CHENNAI: While visuals of people marooned in neck-deep water and cars getting washed away are familiar features of floods, one image of the devastation caused by Michaung that would haunt Chennai in the years to come is that of a young man holding a carton box in a cemetery.

The carton box, which Masood was holding on Sunday, contained the body of a stillborn child his wife Soniya delivered on December 5.

Chennai floods: Man gets newborn's body in carton

When she went into labour that night, their house in Pulianthope in North Chennai was surrounded by floodwaters. Masood's efforts to call an ambulance went in vain.

"Neighbours then helped me take my wife, who was in preterm labour, to a hospital in a tricycle. The private hospital was shut and by the time she

could be taken to another hospital, she delivered the stillborn child. The doctors at the second private hospital did not come to administer first aid till the police intervened," Masood recalls.

That was not the end of his trauma. Soniya was referred to Govt Kilpauk Medical College where the stillborn baby was kept in the mortuary. A staff

sought ₹2,500 to bury the baby. Being a daily wageer, he could not pay... Volunteers of Tamizhaga Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam, a political outfit, offered help. The baby's body was handed in a carton box. When he opened the box at the cemetery, volunteers and Masood were shocked to find the body without a shroud. —N Chithra

C'garh CM to take oath on Wednesday

RAIPUR: Chief Minister-designate Vishnu Deo Sai and his council of ministers will be taking oath on December 13 in Raipur, a state government official said on Monday. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP chief JP Nadda

and other leaders of the party are expected to be present at the ceremony. A tribal face, a political veteran who served as a Union Minister, Vishnu Deo Sai emerged as the dark horse of the week-long suspense over the chief ministerial post of Chhattisgarh.



IN THE COURTYARD

ASI gets 1 more wk to submit Gyanvapi report

PTI / Varanasi

The Varanasi district court has given one more week to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Monday to submit its scientific survey report of the Gyanvapi mosque com-

plex here. District Judge AK Vishvesh gave the additional time of a week to the ASI to conclude the survey and submit its report.

The court fixed December 18 as the next date of hearing in the matter.

Show Yemen court gave option of blood money to victim's kin: HC

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the mother of a Kerala woman, who is on death row in Yemen for killing a Yemeni national, to place documents to show that the foreign court gave her the legal option of paying blood money to negotiate with the victim's family and save her daughter from the gallows. The high court was hearing a plea by Nimisha Priya's mother seeking facilitation of her travel as well as of three others to Yemen to negotiate with the victim's family.

Manik Bhattacharya appointed illegally as law college principal: UGC informs Calcutta HC
Trinamool Congress legislator and former president of the West Bengal Board of Primary Education (WBBPE) Manik Bhattacharya, already in judicial custody because of his alleged involvement in the cash-for-job case, faced more embarrassment in the Calcutta High Court, on Monday. The University Grants Commission (UGC) informed the Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court's single-judge Bench of Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay that Bhattacharya was appointed as the principal of Kolkata-based Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri Law College illegally.

Delhi govt flayed for delay in approving funds for judiciary
The Supreme Court on Monday pulled up the Delhi government for its delay in approving funds for infrastructure projects for the judiciary in capital Delhi and directed Acting Chief Justice of Delhi High Court Manmohan to convene a meeting on Tuesday with the Delhi government chief secretary to expedite the approvals. "We find no reason or justification for the lackadaisical approach of GNCTD (Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi) in meeting the demands of the Delhi district judiciary. We accordingly direct the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court to convene a meeting tomorrow," the apex court said.

Youth must work relentlessly: Modi

AGENCIES / NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi exuded confidence on Monday that India will take a quantum jump during the current period and said the young generation has to be prepared in such a way that it provides leadership to the country and prioritises national interest over everything else.

Launching "Viksit Bharat @2047: Voice of Youth", an initiative that aims to provide a platform to the country's youngsters for contributing ideas to the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, the prime minister said India's youth power is both the "agent of change" and the "beneficiary of change".

"In the life of any nation, history provides a time period when it can make exponential strides in its development journey. For India, the Amrit Kaal is ongoing and this is the period



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the launch of 'Viksit Bharat @2047: Voice of Youth' on Monday

in the country's history when it is going to take a quantum leap. For India, this is the right time," he said, adding that each and every moment of this "Amrit Kaal" should be utilised.

Modi also addressed vice-chancellors of universities, heads of institutes and faculty members at workshops organised at Raj Bhawans across the country.

"The exam date has been declared

for us as the citizens of the country. We have 25 years of Amrit Kaal in front of us. We have to work 24 hours a day. We have to prepare the young generation in such a way that it gives the country leadership and prioritises national interest over everything else," he said.

Noting that the country's rapidly-increasing population is empowered by youngsters, the prime minister in-

formed that India is going to be the leader in terms of the working-age population for the coming 25-30 years and the world recognises this.

"Youth power is both the agent of change and also, the beneficiary of change. The next 25 years are going to be decisive for the careers of the youngsters in colleges and universities. It is the youngsters who are going to create new families and a new society in the future, it is they who have the right to decide how a developed India should be.

"The government wants to connect every youngster of the country with the action plan for a developed India," he said.

Modi stressed moulding the voice of the youngsters into the policy strategy for building a developed India and highlighted the role of educational institutions that maintain maximum contact with them.

Kerala Gov accuses CM of 'conspiring' to hurt him

AGENCIES / Thiruvananthapuram

Accusing Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan of 'conspiring' to hurt him physically, Governor Arif Mohammed Khan claimed on Monday that the attempt made to hurt him was at the direction of the Marxist veteran, reported PTI.

The Kerala governor's accusation came after his vehicle was allegedly hit by activists of the Students Federation of India (SFI), the student wing of the CPI(M), while he was on his way to the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport. A visibly furious Governor stormed out of his car and said his vehicle was hit on both sides and when he stepped out to question them, they fled.

Lok Sabha: BJP to field more women candidates in Bengal

ARITRA SINGHA / Kolkata

The West Bengal unit of BJP is planning to field more women candidates in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections next year.

According to party sources, the saffron camp has decided to field at least 12 women candidates for 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar said that the final selection of the candidates will be done by the

party's central unit.

"As far as respect towards women and upliftment of women is concerned, BJP cannot be compared with any other political party. The final selection of the candidates will be done by the Central unit of the party," said Majumdar.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the Bengal saffron camp had given tickets to five women candidates out of which two won.

From Hooghly consti-

ty actor-turned-politician Locket Chatterjee had won and from Raiganj constituency Debasree Chowdhury had won. Debasree Chowdhury was also made a Union Minister. She was, however, later removed. Sreerupa Mitra Chowdhury from Malda (South), Bharati Ghosh from Ghatal and Mafuja Khatoon from Jangipur were also given tickets but had lost.

"These five candidates are likely to get tickets again," mentioned the BJP sources.

Jolt to Jagan as senior MLA quits

IAN S / Amaravati

In a blow to the ruling YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh, its MLA from Mangalagiri constituency Alla Ramakrishna Reddy re-

signed from the Assembly and the party on Monday.

Ramakrishna Reddy, considered close to Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, submitted his resignation to the Speaker's OSD as the former was not available in his office.

He said he submitted his resignation in Speaker's format and also requested the latter to accept it.

Ramakrishna Reddy said he would soon reveal the reasons for his resignation.

He is said to be unhappy over the appointment of Ganji Chiranjeevi as the YSRCP in-charge for Mangalagiri constituency.

He was also hurt by the demands from a group within the party opposed to him not to give a party ticket to him in the next year's Assembly elections.

Popular as ARK, he had defeated Telugu Desam Party (TDP) general secretary Nara Lokesh in the 2019 elections from Managalgiri, which covers the Amaravati capital region.

He had also filed innumerable cases against the then TDP government with regard to Amaravati lands issue.

ARK said he had been active in the Congress party since the times of Jagan Mohan Reddy's father YS Rajasekhara Reddy.

I-T raids continue for sixth day, sleuths scan documents

AGENCIES / BHUBANESWAR

The Income-Tax department continued its searches in different places linked to an Odisha-based distillery group on charges of tax evasion for the sixth consecutive day on Monday after recovering unaccounted cash to the tune of Rs 353 crore, the "highest-ever" haul in a single action by any probe agency in the country, officials said.

During the day, officials of the income tax department

reached the Sudapada unit of the Boudh Distilleries, owned by a Congress MP's family, in Boudh district where the central agency started its search operations on December 6.

The raids were also conducted at Sambalpur, Titlagarh, Sundargarh, Bolangir and Bhubaneswar, the officials said.

The income tax team, accompanied by information technology professionals, have "now focused on the recovered documents after the counting of seized cash was

completed on Sunday night", they said.

"Unaccounted cash of Rs 353 crore has been counted and seized till Sunday night. This is the highest-ever haul in a single action by any probe agency in the country," one of the officials said.

Opposition BJP in Odisha on Monday intensified its attack on the ruling BJD and the Odisha government, accusing them of "facilitating illegal liquor trade in the state and proliferation of black money".

No connection with party: Adhir

New Delhi: After the seizure of over Rs 300 crore by the Income Tax Department connected to Rajya Sabha MP Dheeraj Sahu, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said the property has no connection with Congress. "This has nothing to do with Congress party. It has no connection with the party... The government should investigate and find whose money is this and how it has been accumulated," said MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

'Sonia, Rahul Gandhi will have to answer'
BJP MPs led by party chief JP Nadda on Monday held a protest in the Parliament Complex. "This is just the tip of iceberg... Rahul and Sonia Gandhi will have to answer whose money it is and how it was looted," Nadda said.

I-T dept raids ex-IFA secretary's premises

The Income Tax Department on Monday conducted raids at premises associated with former Indian Football Association (IFA) secretary Utpal Ganguly in connection with its ongoing probe into financial irregularities in the foreign liquor trade, an official said.

I-T officials were checking relevant documents and speaking with Ganguly at his Dhakuria residence, around

which a cordon was laid by jawans of central forces since morning. "Our officers are speaking with Ganguly and scrutinising documents related to the trade of IMFL (Indian-made Foreign Liquor) with which he was associated," the official said.

Searches were also underway at a couple of offices associated with Ganguly in Ballygunge and Cossipur areas of Kolkata, he said.

Fresh ED summons to Soren

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued a fresh summons to Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren for questioning in a money-laundering case linked to an alleged land scam on Tuesday, official sources said.

Soren, 48, has been asked to depose at the federal agency's regional office in the Hinoo area in Ranchi and get his statement recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said on Monday.

FROM FRONT PAGE

REST IN PEACE (R.I.P.)...

The court also upheld New Delhi's move to reorganise Ladakh as an Indian territory. The Supreme Court answered in favour of the government three questions: one, on the 'unique' and 'special status' of Jammu and Kashmir; two, is Article 370 a 'temporary' or a permanent provision of the Constitution; three, the effective abrogation of Article 370.

In his separate, concurrent judgement, Justice Kishan Kaul called for the creation of a truth and reconciliation body to "heal" the wounds carried by the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that the people of the disputed territory had suffered a lot, and wounds needed healing. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was directed to probe human rights violations by state and non-state actors since the 1980s and find out what the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been through.

Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud and Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul wrote two separate but concurring opinions. The SC held that J&K did not retain any element of sovereignty after its accession to India in 1947.

The court said that although Maharaja Hari Singh, the erstwhile ruler of the princely state, issued a proclamation that he would retain his sovereignty, his successor Karan Singh issued another proclamation that the Indian Constitution would prevail over all other laws in the state.

This, in essence, had the effect of a merger, as was the case with every other princely state that joined India, the court ruled. The court emphatically concluded that Jammu and Kashmir has always been an integral part of India. To buttress his contention, CJI Chandrachud cited Section 3 of the J&K Constitution itself, apart from Article 1 and 370 of the Indian Constitution. Article 3 of the J&K Constitution reads: "The State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India." The state's Constitution also provided that this provision cannot be amended.

Justice Kaul said that being the only state with its own Constitution also does not define a special status. "The purpose of J&K Constitution was to ensure everyday governance in the state and the purpose of Article 370 was to integrate the state with India," he said.

The Supreme Court upheld both the presidential proclamations of August 2019. Apart from the federal issues and the debate around the special status of J&K, the key legal challenge was to the two Presidential proclamations in 2019 which in effect abrogated Article 370.

The court upheld both the proclamations, including the one that gave a new meaning to "constituent assembly of Jammu and Kashmir", as "Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir."

The central issue was whether these actions could be taken by the Union assuming powers of the state when it is under President's rule. Here, the Supreme Court referred to the landmark 1994 ruling in 'SR Bommai v Union of India' which dealt with the powers and limitations of the Governor under President's rule.

CJI DY Chandrachud said that the Governor (President in J&K's case) can assume "all or any" roles of the state legislature and such action must be tested judicially only in extraordinary cases. Relying on an interpretation of the Bommai ruling, the SC said that there is "no prima facie case that the President's orders were malafide or an extraneous exercise of power."

DISAPPOINTING
The verdict was not warmly received in Jammu and Kashmir, where leaders expressed "disappointment."

Democratic Progressive Azad Party President Ghulam Nabi Azad stated: "We are disappointed by the Supreme Court verdict." He added that two institutions could impact the region's status; one is the Parliament, and the other is the Supreme Court. Since the Parliament had abrogated Article 370, our last hopes were with the Supreme Court; today, they have also been dashed. He said that all people, whether from Jammu or Kashmir, are not happy.

He said that the verdict would negatively impact the economy of the valley by raising prices of land while employment opportunities - which were primarily available only in the government sector - would also be impacted. He stated that this was a very good bench, which has given its interpretation. Article 370 was hastily abolished on August 5, 2019; no one bothered to ask the people of Jammu and Kashmir, he said.

Later, he added that while the direction to hold elections and grant statehood were in their favour, removing other rights and protections which would impact their

livelihoods were not in their favour.

Justice seeks healing...

In his epilogue, Justice Kaul referred to the 1947 invasion of the Valley that resulted in parts of J&K being occupied by other countries and the insurgency in the 1980s that led to migration of one part of the population of the State by 1990 and remarked that redressal had not been committed to the fullest extent.

"The situation became so aggravated that the very integrity and sovereignty were endangered. And, the army had to be called in. Armies are meant to fight battles with enemies of the State and not really to control the law and order situation within the State. But then, these were peculiar times. The entry of the army created ground realities in their endeavor to preserve the integrity of the state and the nation against foreign incursions," Justice Kaul added. Justice Kaul further emphasized that the men, women and children of the region had suffered a lot, and that in order to move on, the wounds need healing.

"What is at stake is not simply preventing the recurrence of injustice but the burden of restoring the region's social fabric to what it's historically has been based - co-existence, tolerance and mutual respect," he said.

The first step towards this restoration, according to Justice Kaul, is to achieve a collective understanding of the human rights violations perpetuated both by state and non-state actors against the people of this region.

"There have been numerous reports documenting these incidents over the years. Yet, what is lacking is a commonly accepted narrative of what has happened or, in other words, a collective telling of the truth," Justice Kaul emphasized.

He added that truth-telling provides an opportunity for the victims to narrate their stories, and facilitates acknowledgment from those responsible for perpetuating the wrong and from the society as a whole, which paves way for reconciliation.

Acknowledging the challenges of recommending the setting up of the Commission, he expressed his view that transitional justice and its constituents are facets of transformative constitutionalism. "Globally, constitutionalism has evolved to encompass responsibility of both state and non-state actors with respect to human rights violations. This includes the duty to take reasonable steps to carry out

investigation of violations," he added. As a word of caution, Justice Kaul warned that the Commission, once constituted, should not turn into a criminal court and must instead follow a humanized and personalized process, enabling people to share what they have been through. It should be based on a dialogue allowing for different viewpoints and inputs from all sides, he added.

He further said that to 'facilitate a reparative approach that enables forgiveness for the wounds of the past and forms the basis of achieving a shared national identity,' inclusiveness should be central to the process.

"Needless to say, the commission is one of the many avenues towards the goal of systematic reforms. It is my sincere hope that much would be achieved when Kashmir opens their hearts to embracing the past and facilitating the people who are compelled to migrate to come back with dignity. Whatever has been has been, but the future is ours to see," Justice Kaul concluded, adds Bar and Bench.

Prime Minister paradsrops...

His delighted wife thanked Lord Shiva for her husband's elevation. "Bhagwan Mahakal ka ashirwad hai... party ka ashirwad hai. He has been working with the BJP since 1984. Whenever he came to Ujjain, he went to offer prayers to Mahakal..." she told news agency ANI.

The BJP, in a bid to soothe ruffled feathers, also named two deputy chief ministers — Rajendra Shukla and Jagdish Devda. Former Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar may be elected Speaker of the House, but there was no formal announcement. There was speculation that Tomar, who led the Agriculture Ministry during protests against the farm laws, would succeed Chouhan to the top post. But that was not to be. There were other contenders, too, who are equally shocked — frontrunner Prahlad Patel, Kaliash Vijayvargiya and Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Chouhan resigned immediately after Yadav was elected leader of the BJPLP. A sticker to protocol, he went to Raj Bhawan and handed over his resignation to Governor Mangubhai Patel.

PM Modi will take part in the oath-taking ceremony — to be held either on December 13 or 14.

Yadav, a PhD, has the backing of the RSS; he served student politics in 1982 and entered as president of Students' Union in

1984; he also has degrees in BSC, LLB, MA and MBA.

MP nomination unnerves...

But Monday's developments seem to suggest that the 'CM' could be anyone from among the 115 MLAs. The suspense is likely to end by Tuesday evening. Three party observers, including Union Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, Saroj Pandey and Vinod Tawde, will reach Jaipur on Tuesday morning and hold discussions with MLAs. This is the first time that the BJP had contested the election without a chief ministerial face in Rajasthan and this is the reason it has taken it nine days to finalize the name.

Pune not Manipur...

He further said that even if polls were held now, the tenure of the MP would be just one year.

Joshi's advocate Kushal Mor argued that the election commission had held polls in other constituencies this year. "The by-elections in other constituencies were held after the vacancy arose in the Pune constituency," Mor submitted.

The court then asked Mor to place these details on an affidavit by the next date of hearing on December 13.

Joshi contended that as per section 151A of the 1951 law, the vacancy should be filled through by-poll within six months; therefore the same should have been held by September 28, this year. He said that he had made a representation to the EC in September, however he did not receive any reply following which he approached the HC.

Chinese 'string of pearls'...

India has petitioned the United Nations (UN) to expand its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Arabian Sea near the coast of Gujarat and Mumbai to 500 nautical miles from the current boundary of 200 nautical miles and the grey zone policy of China is a huge threat to Indian economy and national security on the west coast.

Senior officials at the Embassy of China, New Delhi, denied any incursion in the Indian exclusive economic zone and said any Intel reports were fabricated to demonise the image of the Republic of China.

"We haven't heard about the fishing vessels problem or complaints from the Indian side yet. Allow us to check the information and

we will never hesitate to share," Wang Xiaojian, press counsellor, Embassy of China, New Delhi, to the FPI.

Mahua moves SC on ouster

After giving members of Parliament only two hours to read the 104-page ethics committee report after it was tabled, a 30-minute discussion was scheduled. But Moitra was not allowed to speak and she was expelled even before the discussion time was over.

The Lok Sabha ethics committee too has been criticised for being allegedly partisan, and for not allowing Moitra to cross-question those levelling allegations against her.

No bail for Upadhyay

appeal challenging his conviction and sentencing by the sessions court. Upadhyay has approached the high court through advocate Bharat Manghani challenging his conviction contending that the Sessions Court erred while finding him guilty. Pending hearing of his appeal, he had sought bail. Hema and her lawyer Harish Bhamhani were allegedly smothered to death by Vidhyadhar Rajbhar on December 11, 2015, with the help of other accused persons. He killed the duo allegedly at Upadhyay's behest. The next day, a rubbish collector discovered their bodies stuffed in cardboard boxes in a nullah in Kandivali. -- Urvi Mahajani

At 44.6 lakhs for Nov...

international passenger movements was recorded on November 25 at CSMA. The highest-ever single-day Air Traffic Movements (ATMs) with an impressive total of 1,032 aircraft landing and taking off on the CSMA tarmac was on November 11. Mumbai airport had more than 20,000 domestic and more than 7,000 international ATMs in November while Delhi, Bangalore, and Chennai retained their positions as the top domestic destinations for CSMA and flights to Dubai, London, and Abu Dhabi continued to be the preferred international choices. The bustling Mumbai — Delhi route alone recorded a substantial traffic of 557,393 passenger with IndiGo, Vistara, and Air India leading in the domestic market share. IndiGo catered to over 16 lakhs million domestic passengers while in the international sector IndiGo, Air India, and Emirates continued to maintain their leading positions.

MMC grapples to put derailed animal birth prog back on track

QUESTIONS GALORE: WILL CIVIC BODY INVITE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST OR RENEW WITH EXISTING NGO; FLOAT E-TENDER AND WAIVE CODAL FORMALITIES

THE GOAN | NETWORK

MARGAO

Just 20 days for the curtains to come down on the year 2023, Margao Municipal councillors, the Municipal babus and city-BJP leaders, including Congress-turned-BJP MLA Digambar Kamat may have to answer a simple question on the stray dog menace – whether the MMC will ink a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) with an animal welfare organisation to bring back the derailed Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme back on the tracks before the end of the current year?

For, it would be three long years on December 31, 2023 that the MoU with the city-based animal welfare organisation had expired, with the civic body just groping in the dark over the question of rop-



File photo of stray dogs in the commercial capital.

ing in a new NGO to take forward the ABC programme.

That's not all. The Margao civic body may have to grapple with another crucial question, a legal one as and when it decides to ink a new MoU with a NGO. For, the MMC has come under the scanner whether the civic body will invite Expression of Interest

(Eoi) from prospective and eligible bidders and NGOs to take over the city's ABC programme in the New Year or renew the extension with the existing NGO.

Inquiries by The Goan has revealed that despite the issue finding a mention at the Council meetings, the Margao Municipal Council has not

inked any MoU either with the NGO, which has been engaged in the ABC work or a new organisation to take the programme forward.

Inquiries have further revealed that the MoU had reportedly first expired in the year 2016, but the NGO had been carrying out the ABC programme on extension basis till 2020, when the extension has not been renewed for reasons best known to the councillors and Municipal babus.

The Goan understands that a draft-copy of the MoU has reportedly gone to the Municipal legal section for vetting, but the crucial question remains unanswered – can the MMC ink the MoU with the NGO without complying with the codal formalities?

It is reliably learnt that the MMC sanitary section had raised questions wheth-

er the MMC can ink the MoU with the existing NGO on the ground that the NGO is not registered with the national organisation. Officials informed that the ground on which the sanitary section has raised objection may not hold well given that the local NGO has not received any funding from any of the national organisations.

MMC officials in the know, however, informed that the MMC will have to grapple with the moot question, whether Chief Officer Gaurish Sankh-walkar will waive codal formalities when the civic body finally decides on inking a fresh MoU with the NGO to execute the ABC programme. "Given that the MMC will end up in the payment of over Rs 5 lakh annually to the NGO en-

▶ read more on [thegoan.net](#)

People's power prevails, no Sunburn on Dec 31

TOURISM EMPOWERED PANEL REFUSES PERMISSION; TIMING FOR EVENT RESTRICTED UP TO 10 PM

THE GOAN | NETWORK

PANAJI

With the State government officially denying permission for the Sunburn Electronic Dance Music (EDM) festival on December 31, organisers claim they will refund tickets purchased for that particular day.

The Empowered Committee under the Goa Tourism Board which met on Monday, resolved to refuse permission for Sunburn on December 31 and also to restrict the event's timing up to 10 pm instead of the customary midnight and beyond, on all three days from December 28-30.

A visibly upset Chairman and Managing Director of Percept Ltd Harinder Singh assured a refund to ticket holders for December 31. "If you have purchased the ticket, money will definitely be refunded. Check the ticket, every ticket mentions 'subject

KHAUNTE SPEAK: LOUD & CLEAR

■ I had said it before and am saying it even now that Sunburn (organisers) cannot make govt dance to its tunes

■ Matter has been discussed with CM and he too agreed that EDM will not be allowed on Dec 31

■ Our small local business hubs, which heavily rely on this day for a good earning, should not be affected

■ If Percept MD (Singh) thinks he can manage to get permission to play music beyond 10 pm this time, then 'no'

to government permission'..." he said replying to media questions at the Tourism Department, where the meeting was convened.

"Check when the permissions have come in the last 18 years... The permission process takes time and if we sell the tickets last minute, how many will buy? For this reason, we sell advance tickets and people are aware that if it (event) doesn't happen, they will get a refund," he added in a bid to justify their stand

in going ahead with selling tickets from December 28-31 despite opposition from the people and pending government decision.

Putting speculations to rest, Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte said that even Chief Minister Pramod Sawant concurred with the decision to host Sunburn on its traditional dates, from December 28 to 30, and opposed the extended date of December 31.

▶ read more on [thegoan.net](#)

IN SHORT >>

S Goa power cut on Dec 17 cancelled

PANAJI: The Electricity department has cancelled the power shutdown it had planned for almost the entire South Goa on December 17. A notice issued by the office of the Superintending Engineer at the Aquem-Margao office said that the planned shutdown from 7 am to 3 pm has been cancelled.

PAC, PUC meeting to be held today

PANAJI: Each of the seven-member Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and Public Undertaking Committee (PUC) are scheduled to convene its respective meetings on Tuesday, focusing exclusively on observations of Comptroller and Auditor General reports dating back to 2014-15.

Soon, healthcare at your doorstep

PANAJI: The Health Minister Vishwajit Rane on Monday announced to introduce healthcare services at people's doorstep. He said a meeting with CM is scheduled where health sector will be strengthened and healthcare will be provided at people's doorstep.

Denied OCI status, Goans seek speedy resolution to issue

THE GOAN | NETWORK

PANAJI

Amidst the State government's stoic silence over the revocation of Indian passports of those holding a Portuguese Bilhete de Identidade or Asento de Nascimento, a group of local citizens have come together to highlight a challenging situation being faced by many wherein not only passports are being revoked upon renewal, these applicants are also denied Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) status.

Addressing a press conference at Azad Maidan on Monday, the citizens argued that the revoking of passports and the legal framework governing OCI are different.

"We won't get into the circular (by the Ministry of External Affairs dated November 30, 2022) about revoking passports, but why is OCI not allowed or being denied to these people? When there is a different law for OCI, you (Passport Offices) just can't punish a person whose passport is revoked," said one of

POINTS TO PONDER

■ Can't punish a person whose passport is revoked when there is a different law for OCI

■ Citizenship Act allows citizens of other countries who have at some point been citizens of India, their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren eligible for registration as OCIs

■ Goans, despite deep-rooted connections to their State, are being shockingly denied OCI status

them, while seeking immediate relief from Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and NRI Commissioner Narendra Sawaikar.

The locals further pointed out the Citizenship Act

▶ read more on [thegoan.net](#)

4 months on, staff of S Goa Admin of Comunidades not paid salaries

EMPLOYEES HOPE TO GET DUES BEFORE CHRISTMAS

THE GOAN | NETWORK

MARGAO

Non-payment of salaries of the 30-odd employees of the South Goa Administrator of Comunidades have come back to haunt the authorities again.

If sources are to be believed, it's now about four months since the Comunidade employees have not received their salaries. And, they keep

their fingers crossed whether they would get their salaries on the eve of the ensuing Christmas festival along with other government employees or wait for the New Year to ring in good news.

This is the first time after many months that the Comunidade employees have to go without the monthly salaries for the last four months.

An employee has attribut-

ed the non-payments of the employees' salaries to issues relating to the budgetary head through which the salaries were paid in the past.

Given that the next Assembly session is expected to take place in the month of January, sources said the issues relating to the budgetary head are expected to be resolved in the

▶ read more on [thegoan.net](#)

Tiger reserve: Respondents given four weeks to reply

THE GOAN | NETWORK

PANAJI

The Supreme Court registrar has ruled that the Goa government's plea challenging the Bombay High Court at Goa's order for notifying a tiger reserve in the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary and surrounding areas "shall be processed for listing before the Court 'as per

rules' after a period of four weeks.

The Registrar took on record the counter affidavit filed by the Goa Foundation and asked the other two respondents to file their responses if any within a period of four weeks after which the matter shall be placed before the Court.

In September this year, the

Supreme Court had issued a notice on a Special Leave Petition filed by the Goa government against the High Court judgement which ordered the State government to notify a tiger reserve within a period of three months.

Crucially, however, the Supreme Court has not issued any stay on the operation of the High Court order.

Govt mulls drones to keep eye on forests, wildlife sanctuaries

THE GOAN | NETWORK

PANAJI

Taking serious note of the multiple fire incidents in and around the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary and raging blaze reported in several other parts of the State earlier this year leading to large scale destruction, the Goa government has now proposed the use of drones to monitor forest areas, wildlife sanctuaries and national park.

Addressing a press conference on Monday, Forest Minister Vishwajit Rane said that the department will make use of drone technology to monitor all forest areas including reserved, protected, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and private forests. He said that in the first phase, eight to ten drones would be put for surveillance.

Rane said that the technology will monitor forests on a large scale wherein it will keep track of suspicious activities, fires or any other activities within the forest areas and thus it will enhance trans-

EYE IN THE SKY

■ Eight to ten drones to be put for surveillance

■ To track suspicious activities, fires or any other activities within the forest areas

■ Will enhance transparency, credibility of forest governance

■ To provide real time mapping and data, especially on forest fires

parency, credibility of forest governance in the eye of the public.

A drone is a remote-controlled, unstaffed aerial vehicle (UAV) that can provide a 360-degree view during its flight.

"We are currently training staff on drone monitoring. This also includes women. The technology will provide us with real time mapping and

▶ read more on [thegoan.net](#)

Fuel leak: Malaysian team to arrive on December 14

THE GOAN | NETWORK

VASCO

An international agency from Malaysia is set to arrive in the State on Thursday and will use the latest technology to check for any issue along the entire 14-km pipeline between the Port and the Zuari Indian Oil Adani Ventures Limited (ZIAVL) oil storage tanks at Sancoale.

Stating this while speaking to The Goan, a source also said ZIAVL has been excavating the area around the pipeline to check for any leakages. "We have been excavating

It has been 19 days since the main fuel pipeline at Sancoale has been shut after wells in Matvem area of Dabolim had been found contaminated with fuel

the area around the pipeline and we have now reached as far as Vishal Mega Mart area. Since Matvem is a low lying area and based below our pipelines, we had identified the stretch till Vales Junction but have now reached Vishal Mega Mart," said a source.

It has been 19 days since the

main fuel pipeline between the Mormugao Port Authority and the oil storage tanks at ZIAVL at Sancoale has been shut after wells in Matvem area of Dabolim had been found contaminated with fuel.

However despite making all efforts to find the source of minor leakage, if any, ZIAVL is yet to come clear on the exact location of the leakage.

"We are also continuously making all arrangements to find the leakage, if any, in our pipelines and we have deployed an agency and even pressed a sniffer dog in service," said the source.

One in three MSMEs in Goa owned by a woman: Data

THE GOAN | NETWORK

PANAJI

Nearly one in every three Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) in Goa is owned by a woman entrepreneur, statistics furnished in parliament by Union Minister of State for MSMEs Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma has revealed.

Of the total registered micro, small and medium enterprises in Goa, 28.69 per cent are owned by women. Back in March this year, the proportion of MSMEs owned by women was 22.09 per cent, a clear rise of over six percentage points over nine months.

Also, the employment rate of women in MSMEs is 22.94

WOMEN POWER: FAST FACTS

■ Of the total registered micro, small and medium enterprises in Goa, 28.69 % are owned by women

■ Employment rate of women in MSMEs is 22.94%

■ Sector has employed 2.63 lakh people in Goa of which just 60,000-odd were women



■ 20,947 employees in 542 establishments in Goa benefited from Centre's Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana

per cent, according to the reply furnished by Verma in the Rajya Sabha. He said, the sector has employed 2.63 lakh people in Goa of which just 60,000-odd were women.

Meanwhile, 20,947 employees in 542 establishments in Goa benefited from the Centre's Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana, according to information furnished by Union

Minister of State for Labour and Welfare Rameshwar Teli in the Lok Sabha.

Between October 2020 to December 2023, 20,947 employees in 542 establishments in Goa got the benefit, Teli said.

Maharashtra was the State with the highest number of employee beneficiaries with 22,447 establishments and 9,78,812 employees of these companies benefitting. Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Karnataka ranked in that order after Maharashtra.

The Centre launched the scheme after the Covid-19 pandemic badly affected the industrial sector to support workers and the related com-

panies and establishments.

Initially, the scheme was intended to generate more employment in the country but was modified due to the pandemic and implemented through the Employees Provident Fund Organization.

Under the scheme, employees with less than Rs 15,000 monthly salaries and who are members of 'EPFO' but lost their jobs due to the pandemic between May 1, 2020 and September 30 2020, were eligible for the benefits wherein the Central government deposited the 24 per cent 'PF' contribution – 12 percent each of both the company and the employee sides – where the companies had a worker strength of less than 1,000.

Legal tangle dulls diamond bourse

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / SURAT

The grand inauguration of the world's largest office building, the Surat Diamond Bourse (SDB) by PM Modi on December 17 is overshadowed by a legal battle concerning unpaid dues.

Ahmedabad-based PSP Projects Limited, the construction company responsible for the mammoth project, has filed a case for the recovery of outstanding payments amounting to Rs 500 crore.

The Surat sessions court has issued a notice to the SDB management, demanding a bank guarantee of Rs 100 crore within a week. This development has cast a shadow on the celebratory mood surrounding the inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, raising questions about financial transparency and accountability.

The SDB management, however, has refuted the allegations. Laljibhai Patel, chairman of the SDB construction committee, claims that 98 per cent of the construction cost has already been paid to PSP Projects and its owner, PS Patel. He further stated that the remaining 2 per cent will be re-



leased upon the completion of some pending civil works.

Patel also countered the company's claim regarding losses incurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to the construction's temporary suspension. According to him, the SDB fulfilled all financial obligations and even provided food and other support to the construction workers during the lockdown.

Meanwhile, preparations are on at full swing at the SDB, where a giant dome is being constructed for the inauguration ceremony of PM Modi.

PSP Projects, known for its vision and techno-commercial capabilities, was awarded the contract to

build the SDB, a complex spanning 66 lakh sq. ft. with a contract value of Rs 1,575 crore. The SDB, a non-profit organisation responsible for the project's development, is poised to become India's second major diamond trade hub after Mumbai's Bharat Diamond Bourse.

Despite its impressive size and potential impact on Surat's diamond industry, the controversy surrounding unpaid dues has tarnished the SDB's inauguration. The outcome of the legal battle will determine whether the project can truly stand as a symbol of India's economic progress or remain a monument to unresolved financial disputes.

Workers threaten stir ahead of PM's visit

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / SURAT

The Diamond Worker Union Gujarat has threatened to launch a major agitation ahead of PM Narendra Modi's visit to Surat for the inauguration of Surat Diamond Bourse on December 17. The union is demanding that the Gujarat government address the long-standing grievances of diamond artisans regarding their economic and financial well-being.

In a memorandum submitted to the Surat district collector, DWUG officials stated that over 25 lakh diamond artisans are employed in the industry across Gujarat. However, a majority of these workers are denied the minimum wage benefits guaranteed by labour laws.

Adding to the workers' woes, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has resulted in widespread job losses in

the diamond industry. Hundreds of artisans were rendered jobless in the months leading up to Diwali, and many small and medium-sized diamond units remain closed even after the festival season. This has pushed many artisans into a cycle of debt and mental distress as they struggle to repay personal loans taken from private financiers.

"More than 30 diamond artisans in Surat have committed suicide in recent months due to financial burden," stated Bhavesh Tank, VP of DWUG.

DWUG officials highlighted the irony that while the diamond barons have constructed the world's largest office building, the Surat Diamond Bourse, scheduled to be inaugurated by PM Modi, the artisans who form the backbone of the industry have been neglected and left to fend for themselves financially.

Maintenance work to disrupt Valsad-Surat train services

Surat: About half a dozen trains will be affected for two day following a scheduled block between Maroli and Sachin Yard in the Valsad-Surat section, beginning December 12. Western Railway has announced the block to

facilitate the replacement of steel girders with PSC slabs on Bridge No. 420. The block is set for a duration of 4 hours each on December 12 and 13, significantly impacting the schedule of several train services along the route.

AAP MLA encourages ACB inquiry into his assets

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / AHMEDABAD

In a notable move, Umesh Makwana, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA representing Botad, has formally requested an inquiry by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) into his income and assets, marking the completion of his one-year tenure.

Makwana conveyed to The FPJ that on this significant milestone, he has specifically sought an ACB inquiry into his financial records and possessions. Addressing a letter to Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Makwana emphasised the need for similar inquiries encompassing the income and assets of all 182 MLAs, IPS and IAS officers in the state.

Advocating for transparency in governance, Makwana urged that the findings of these inquiries be made accessible online, enabling the public to scrutinise the financial status of elected representatives and other officials.

Expressing his rationale behind the move, Makwana highlighted the importance of constituents being in-



Umesh Makwana emphasised the need for annual inquiries with subsequent publication of reports

formed about his income and assets, indicating his earlier submission of an affidavit during nomination for the Botad seat.

Moreover, Makwana emphasised the need for annual inquiries with subsequent publication of reports, aligning with his belief that elected representatives often face criticism regarding their work quality.

When questioned about the initiative's alignment with the party's stance, Makwana clarified that his decision stemmed from his personal conviction and conscience.

Earlier, on December 8, Makwana conducted a live session on social media, pre-

sending a comprehensive account of his one-year performance as an MLA. He asserted that just as he was transparent about his work, it was imperative for constituents to be aware of his financial standing.

The Aam Aadmi Party, led by Arvind Kejriwal, holds five seats in the Gujarat Assembly. While the party exhibited significant promise leading up to the December 2022 assembly elections, it fell short in securing a substantial number of seats, although it attained the status of a National Party according to the Election Commission of India, owing to the percentage of votes garnered.

Onion prices drop by 50%

Increase of stock in markets result of ongoing export ban

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / RAJKOT

India's recent decision to ban the export of onion till March 2024 has triggered tumultuous ripples across domestic markets, resulting in a staggering 50 per cent drop in onion prices within a mere 36 hours. The abrupt halt in onion trading at the Rajkot APMC market underscores the immediate fallout, while Bhavnagar gears up to resume operations.

Ranked second in onion production after Maharashtra, Gujarat contributed significantly to the onion supply in 2022-23, cultivating 82,197 hectares and yielding 21,09, 830 metric tonnes. The unexpected export ban follows a surge in prices during Sep and Oct, leading farmers to anticipate promising returns, cultivating approximately 80,000 to 85,000 hectares.

Rajkot market trader Rameshbhai elucidated the market's staggering fluctuations, narrating the onion prices' as-



cent from Rs 250-270 per 20 kilograms to a peak of Rs 600. However, the export ban prompted an immediate cessation in purchases, plummeting prices to Rs 350 for 20 kilograms within a day and a half. Both traders and farmers face substantial losses, compelling the closure of onion trading in Rajkot for the broader benefit of all stakeholders.

Over the weekend, a surge of 20,000 50-kilogram onion bags flooded the market, escalating from an initial daily inflow of 5,000 bags. The market

now awaits stabilisation in prices before resuming trading, aligning with the sentiments of farmers and traders.

In Gujarat, the Mahuva and Bhavnagar market yards stand as pivotal hubs for onion trading. Bhavnagar, notably impacted by the export ban's aftermath, witnessed a standstill on Monday.

However, following discussions with APMC officials and farmers, the Bhavnagar market plans to recommence trading on Tuesday to mitigate potential losses for farmers.

Cadila Pharmaceuticals installs RO water ATMs in Gujarat villages

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / AHMEDABAD

In a proactive response to the persistent challenge of access to clean drinking water in rural areas, the Indrashil Kaka-Ba and Kala Budh Public Charitable Trust, the philanthropic division of Cadila Pharmaceuticals, has taken a significant step by installing RO water dispensers in three villages within Dholka taluka of Gujarat.

The villages of Bheta-wada, Transad and Virdi have benefited from the installation of these RO water ATMs, strategically positioned to alleviate water scarcity concerns.

Each of these ATMs possesses a substantial capacity, producing 1,000 litres of purified water per hour, effectively catering to the entire community's needs. Operating around the clock, these facilities offer clean drinking water to over 10,000 residents and



1,500 households at a nominal rate of Rs. 5 for 20 litres.

This impactful initiative, aimed at community welfare, has seen the installation of three RO water ATMs at an investment of Rs. 20 lakh.

Dr. Bharat Champaneria, a trustee, emphasised the Trust's vision for sustainability and community involvement in this endeavour. "While we facilitated the installation of RO water ATMs,

our goal was to make it a self-sustaining venture, fostering a sense of ownership among local communities. This model benefits everyone involved, allowing villagers to manage maintenance using the collected funds while ensuring access to clean and safe drinking water for villagers," stated Dr. Champaneria.

Highlighting the project's scalability and sustainability, Dr. Champaneria stressed its adaptability to regions grappling with challenges such as high TDS levels or contamination. This initiative underscores the pharma's commitment to social responsibility and sustainable development, aiming to uplift local communities by addressing fundamental needs.

The Trust plans to expand this initiative, exploring potential locations, assessing local conditions, feasibility, and collaborating with local authorities to implement additional RO water ATMs.

Political twist as Congress leader praises BJP strategies

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / AHMEDABAD

As the Lok Sabha elections draw nearer, even the smallest remarks from politicians are sparking conversations across the state. In Vadodara, a Congress leader's unexpected praise for the BJP's campaign style has stirred a buzz, while the BJP gears up of state-level meetings in preparation for the forthcoming elections.

During a gathering organised by the Vadodara District Congress Committee in Padra town, district panchayat member **Arjunsinh Padhiyar** made a noteworthy comment.

Praising BJP's consistent election preparations, he remarked, "The BJP wins elections be-

cause its workers and leaders are constantly engaged, 365 days a year. They proudly sport the party scarf at all times. In contrast, Congress members barely acknowledge the party scarf for 59 months. It only surfaces from the cupboard and gets worn for a few days nearing elections, making victory a challenge for the party." Arjunsinh's statement, perceived as a compliment to the BJP, has become a topic of discussion among politicians and Congress party members alike.

Meanwhile, in proactive election planning, the BJP has initiated preparations for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. State unit president C R Patil has convened a meeting at the party's state unit office, scheduled for Tuesday. The gathering, chaired by party president and Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, aims to assemble party MLAs and MPs.

World ice-cream flavours in Surat

MELVYN THOMAS / SURAT

The Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd, known for its Amul brand of dairy products, has opened its seventh 'Amul Ice Lounge' in Surat, offering a premium ice-cream experience to the city's residents. This marks the first-of-its-kind Amul Ice Lounge in South Gujarat.

The new outlet was inaugurated on Monday by Jayen Mehta, Managing Director of GCMMF, at the Surat Diamond Bourse (SDB), the world's largest office building.

The lounge boasts a luxurious ambience where customers can indulge in a variety of international ice-cream flavours made with Amul's high-quality milk.

The international ice-cream flavours include French caramel, English apple, Persian peach, Belgian chocolate, Swiss chocolate,



Jamaican toto, Spanish tango, Italia fudge, Turkish coffee, California slow churn, Gelato chocolate etc.

"We have two Amul Ice Lounges each in Ahmedabad and Pune, one each in Mumbai and Jaipur, and this seventh outlet is inaugurated in the prestigious Surat Diamond Bourse," said Jayen Mehta. "The idea behind Amul Ice Lounge is to offer the best of the best flavours from around the world under one roof."

"Surat Diamond Bourse is the world's largest office

building and it will be visited by scores of international diamond buyers. Both the merchants in India and abroad will be able to savour the international flavours of ice-creams at Amul Ice Lounge," said Mehta.

Mehta revealed ambitious expansion plans, aiming to open 100 upscale Amul Ice Lounges across India in the next financial year. He highlighted Surat as a key target market, recognising the city's potential and desire for premium ice-cream experiences.

Locals oppose cheetah breeding centre in Banni

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / RAJKOT

The Central Government's recent approval of the Cheetah Breeding Centre in Kutch district's Banni Grassland area faces staunch opposition from local pastoralists, raising concerns about potential disruptions to animal husbandry activities.

A delegation spearheaded by the Banni Pasu Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan-Kutch presented a memorandum to district authorities, highlighting apprehensions about the cheetah breeding centre's impact on their livelihoods.

Isabhai Mutva, BPUMSK's project coordinator, voiced objections, asserting that the government green-lit the project without consulting local stakeholders, despite the absence of evidence supporting historical cheetah presence in the area. Mutva em-

phasised the peril the breeding centre poses to domestic cattle, a vital source of sustenance for residents, and indicated the submission of a memorandum to the district collector along with a letter to the Prime Minister of India in opposition to the project.

Meanwhile, Valamji Humble, chairman of Sharhad Dairy in Kutch district, lauded the significant milk contributions from pastoralists in the Banni region during the recent annual general meeting. He commended their daily production of approximately one lakh litres of milk, with 60,000 to 70,000 litres procured solely from the pastoral Banni grassland.

Humble praised the superior quality of Banni grass, attributing it to the high milk yields in the region and noting that the area's milk falls under the esteemed 'A2'.

PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION

MIT exhibition explores infectious diseases with comics

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / GANDHINAGAR

Argha Manna, Artist-in-Residence professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, in collaboration with Professor Lydia Bourouiba, founder of the Health Network, presents an enthralling exhibition, 'Paradigm shift in infectious diseases' at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA. This unique showcase offers a visual exploration of the history and research behind infectious disease transmission through the engaging medium of comics.

Accompanying this artistic display is a panel discussion, on until Dec 14, providing an enriching opportunity to delve deeper into this subject. Titled 'Scientific method



and the advancement of science through comics and illustrations', this exhibit ingeniously chronicles the evolution of scientific ideas and infectious disease research

from ancient Greece to contemporary times. Using comics and illustrations, it unfolds a cohesive narrative, weaving together diverse cultural aspects of disease trans-

mission research.

The exhibition's primary goal is to demystify the complexities surrounding the transmission of airborne pathogens and underscore

the importance of transcending disciplinary boundaries in understanding physiological processes, biology and physiology. It accentuates how scientific methodological advancements drive paradigm shifts in scientific understanding.

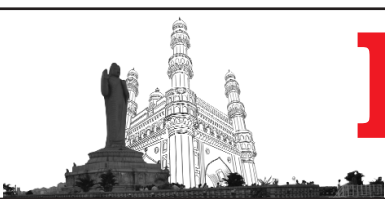
Professors Manna and Bourouiba adeptly employ visual storytelling through comics to elucidate intricate scientific concepts, facilitating a broader public comprehension of the evolving landscape of human knowledge.

Discussing the approach at the MIT, Prof. Manna remarked, "Prof. Bourouiba and I endeavoured to extend our outreach beyond academia using comics. Our aim is to illuminate the philosophy driving scientific progress rooted in paradigm-shifting ideas."

Actor Prakash Raj visits KCR at Yashoda hospital

HYDERABAD: Noted film actor Prakash Raj today went to Yashoda Hospital at Somajiguda here to visit Telangana's first Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. On the occasion, the working president of the party

accompanied him. Prakash Raj enquired about KCR's health condition. He learned that he was recovering from his injury. Prakash Raj also interacted with MLC Kavitha, who was at the hospital.



CM Revanth meets Jana Reddy



FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy paid a courtesy call on former minister and Congress senior leader K Jana Reddy at his residence here on Monday. Jana Reddy, who was the leader of Opposition in the first Telangana Assembly, congratulated Revanth Reddy for being elected as the Chief Minister and felicitated him. Both leaders were engaged in a conversation for a while.

Jana Reddy, who is one of the senior-most politicians in Telangana and has worked in the Cabinets of N T Rama Rao as a member of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in

the combined Andhra Pradesh and later in the Cabinets of Y S Rajashekhar Reddy, K Rosaiah and N Kiran Kumar Reddy as Congress MLA, has not been active in politics for some time due to age factor.

In the recently held Assembly elections, his son Jaiveer Reddy has contested from Nagarjunasagar Assembly constituency in Nalgonda district and has been elected as an MLA.

Earlier, Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy also called on Congress leader Jana Reddy at his residence in the city. MLA Jaiveer Reddy felicitated Uttam Kumar Reddy to mark the occasion.

Babu meets KCR, wishes him a speedy recovery



TDP Supremo and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday called on former Telangana State CM and BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao who is recovering from a hip joint replacement surgery at a private hospital in Hyderabad. Chandrababu Naidu enquired about KCR's health and wished him a speedy recovery. Later speaking to media persons, Chandrababu Naidu hoped that KCR would recover fast and would continue his work with the people.

Niranjan slams Kishan Reddy's comments

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

G. Niranjan, TPCC Senior Vice President & Chairman, Election Commission Coordination committee today said State BJP president G. Kishan Reddy's comments criticizing the Congress raise suspicions that he has lost his mental balance.

He criticized the Congress saying that people are holding their heads for electing the Congress to power. For the past three years, every BJP leader, including Narendra Modi has been clamouring to come to power, but the people of Telangana have limited them to single digit. Not knowing where to put his head, Kishan Reddy was talking as the people were holding their heads for electing the Congress to power. Actually, people are laughing after hearing his words, he added.

Elections were held on November 30, results declared on December 3, from the day of swearing-in on December 7, the Congress government under Revanth Reddy, broke the

Pragathi Bhavan boundary wall and held the praja durbar from the next day but also implemented two of the six guarantees, free bus transport for women and raised Argya Sree limit to Rs 10 lakh. It was not proper for Kishan Reddy to criticise like a blind man. There are only eight BJP MLAs, but they are unable to decide their Legislative Assembly party leader. They are actually holding their heads.

He also said the Congress has always been against Majlis and its policies.

Though the Majlis leaders scolded the Congress leaders, Akbaruddin Owaisi was appointed as the

Protem Speaker in accordance with the traditions of the Assembly. It is not appropriate for the BJP to criticise on this matter, blame the Congress, and throw away the dust. He said Congress has condemned Akbar's provocative remarks every time. If Akbaruddin is disqualified as pro-term Speaker, PM Modi, who also makes communal comments, is also disqualified for the post of Prime Minister.

'Govt to conduct inquiry into alleged irregularities in irrigation projects'

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

Minister for Irrigation Uttam Kumar Reddy has revealed that the State government will order an inquiry into the alleged irregularities in the construction of Medigadda and Kaleswaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) scheme.

Speaking to the media here on Monday after holding a review meeting with officials on the Irrigation projects, Uttam Kumar Reddy said that during the previous government, there was a discussion among the people that a huge scale of corruption in the construction of projects, issuance of secret G.O.s and secrecy in the irrigation department and said that such bad perception should go and there should be transparency in the irrigation department.

"The works in the irrigation department should be taken up in a transparent manner and officials should keep it mind that projects are being constructed with people's money. The Irrigation projects are very important for the Telangana State and there should be a third party check in irrigation works. All should work sincerely and should remove the miscon-



The works in the irrigation department should be taken up in a transparent manner and officials should keep it mind that projects are being constructed with people's money.

— Uttam Kumar Reddy, Minister for Irrigation

ceptions among the people about the irrigation department," Uttam said.

The Minister assured that he would discuss with the Union government on the issue of water sharing in the Krishna River between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh States and would try to resolve it as early as possible.

He made it clear that the Congress government would

complete all the pending irrigation projects and it would pay attention to the management of 40,000 ponds across the Telangana State.

During the meeting, Uttam Kumar Reddy also enquired about the consumption of power for the lift Irrigation projects and conducted in depth review on the status of Kaleswaram, Palamuru Rangareddy, Sitarama and other projects in Telangana.

Speed limits on RGI Airport main access road increased

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

The SHO RGIA, Shamshabad Traffic PS has informed that he caused enquiries on the application of K. Sanjay Kapu Raju, Vice-President and Head, Ground Transpiration at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Shamshabad for grant of approval for revision of the speed from 60 KMPH to 80 KMPH and also enforcement system on the main access road at RGI Airport.

Accordingly, Cyberabad Police Commissioner M. Stephen Raveendra, IPS, notified that the speed limits increased from 60 kmph to 80 kmph on the main access road at RGI Airport, Shamshabad in the interest of the public.

Minister orders arrangements for Medaram Jatara

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister D Anasuya (Seethakka) has informed that the State government will celebrate the biennial 'Medaram Jatara' on the grand scale this time.

The Minister held a review meeting on the arrangements for the mega tribal festival 'Medaram Jatara', which will be held at Medaram village of Mulugu district in February, 2024, at the Tribal Welfare department office here on Monday and directed the officials concerned to take all the arrangements for the grand conduct of festival.

During the review meeting, the Minister discussed about arrangements, including sanitation, roads, elec-



tricity, availability of drinking water, bathing ghats and facilities for devotees and gave orders to the officials in this regard.

"The State government will once again send proposals to the Union government seeking the national status to the Medaram Jatara. If the Centre sanctions funds for the festival, the State government can organise the festival on more grandly," Seethakka said.

Lokesh reaches 3000 Kms milestone in Yuva Galam

FPJ BUREAU/TUNI

TDP National general secretary and former Minister Nara Lokesh has now completed a key achievement of walking a staggering 3000 km through this mega walkathon. The TDP made special arrangements to celebrate the milestone in Tetagunta, Tuni constituency, where Lokesh crossed the 3000 km mark.

To mark the historic occasion of completing the 3000 Kms on foot, a Pylan was erected and inaugurated. To add to the speciality of the occasion, the entire Lokesh's family were with him celebrating the milestone.

Nandamuri Mokshgna and Lokesh's son, Nara Devansh were at the event and so was Nara Brahmani. With the presence of the Nandamuri and Nara family

To mark the historic occasion of completing the 3000 Kms on foot, a Pylan was erected and inaugurated. To add to the speciality of the occasion, the entire Lokesh's family were with him celebrating the milestone.

members, the event gained a very positive and happy vibe. Lokesh was also seen in great spirits as he sported a bright smile on his face. Mokshagna, Devansh, and Brahmani actively joined hands with Lokesh on the walkathon and watching the next generation of TDP brigade in action thrilled the participants.



Thandel Muhurtham Ceremony held with pomp and show

Yuva Samrat Naga Chaitanya and director Chandoo Mondeti joined forces for the third time for a crazy project Thandel to be produced by Bunny Vasu and presented by Allu Aravind on the Geetha Arts banner. This high-budget film, which is the most expensive one for Naga Chaitanya, had its grand launching ceremony today. King Nagarjuna and Victory Venkatesh attended the Pooja ceremony which was also graced by numerous film celebrities.

Nagarjuna switched on the camera for the muhurtham shot, while Venkatesh sounded the clapboard. Allu Aravind handed over the script to the director.

While speaking at the event, Allu Aravind said, "We wanted to organise this event in a big way, and thanks to Nagarjuna and Venkatesh for gracing the occasion. We started this journey of Thandel one and a half years ago. We are happy that we completed the pooja ceremony today. The director and hero were so patient and



worked vigorously to take us to the world of Thandel. After delivering a blockbuster, directors will usually have many offers. But Chandoo honoured the commitment. Usually, Rajamouli

does that. Both Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi got excited when they first heard the story. We wanted to release the movie in other languages as well. Devi Sri Prasad who attained Pan In-

dia success is part of the movie, and we are content with it. Shamdat is on board to take care of the camera. I feel very positive and auspicious for this film to get all of them on board. I got very excited after a long time, when the board discussion was happening. Let's discuss the meaning of the title Thandel later."

Chandoo Mondeti said, "It's a one-and-a-half year of

This high-budget film, which is the most expensive one for Naga Chaitanya, had its grand launching ceremony today. King Nagarjuna and Victory Venkatesh attended the Pooja ceremony which was also graced by numerous film celebrities.

hard work. Why would a director go out, when we get so much love and care in this production house? Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi are ready to give their best. They are motivating me. I promise my team to give my best."

Sai Pallavi said, "Happy to see you all after one year. There's so much positivity here. The director, writer, and producers all have a vision for this film. It has to come and reach you the right way. We all are hoping for the same."

Naga Chaitanya said, "I'm happy, the pooja was performed today. As Aravind Garu said, we have been travelling with the script for one and a half years. I enjoyed every step of the pre-production process. The work happened collaboratively, starting from interacting with the

locals in Srikakulam. We worked on Srikakulam slang. I haven't had this much of an elaborate planning for any of my previous movies. I enjoyed this process. I still remember, Aravind garu came to my house 3-4 months back and suggested that this movie should be made properly.

"This script has a lot of potential," he told me. '100%' Love from this banner is one of the most memorable successes in my career. More than a director, Chandoo is a good friend. This is our third movie together. I'm looking forward to this journey. Sai Pallavi is such an encouraging actor. She is such a positive energy. We have a good team. I'm happy to associate with Devi Sri Prasad after a long time. We are planning to start the shooting after December 15th."

Bunny Vasu said, "It's a very special script for our Geetha Arts. While this movie started one and half years ago for almost everyone, the script came to us 3 years back. I don't think this kind of research was done before for a film."

Heartfelt thanks to the writers' team. We felt something was missing, but Chandoo changed the shape of the movie. We narrated the story to Naga Chaitanya during Dhootha's shoot. We were initially worried whether his skin tone would set for the character of a fisherman. But we were surprised to see the first look poster. Hats off to Chay, he's been working on it for 1 year and moulded himself for the character. He has put in 200% effort. When a team pumps in positive energy, the project never fails."

Naga Chaitanya switched beast mode to play a fisherman in the movie and he has done intense workouts for the last few months to gain this muscular look. He sports a rugged look with long hair and beard.



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: Principles have no real force except when one is well-fed.

— MARK TWAIN



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EDIT

THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL

Tough road ahead for I.N.D.I.A alliance

The I.N.D.I.A alliance of 28 Opposition parties appeared to be tottering following the Bharatiya Janata Party's recent spectacular victory in three Hindi heartland states and the consequent rout of the Indian National Congress. However, the expulsion of Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra from the Lok Sabha following an Ethics Committee report indicting her appears to have breathed new life into the Opposition bloc with all the parties rallying behind the firebrand MP. The Congress' poor performance in the elections to the Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan Assemblies brought to the fore differences in the grouping, as the Samajwadi Party and the TMC were quick to blame the Grand Old Party for poor poll preparedness and an unwillingness to reach seat-sharing arrangements with other parties. A meeting of the alliance called by the Congress on December 6 had to be postponed as many parties expressed their unwillingness to attend it. The imputation was clear — the Congress was in no position to call the shots where the alliance was concerned as it was proving to be a liability rather than an asset in the tough task ahead, that of taking on the BJP government in the 2024 battle. These differences were apparent even during the poll campaign, but appear to have been resolved thanks to some behind-the-scenes efforts, and a meeting of the I.N.D.I.A alliance is now scheduled for December 19, with most important leaders agreeing to attend.

The Mahua Moitra case could well be a rallying point for the Opposition grouping as her expulsion is being viewed as a witch-hunt by the government and against the principles of natural justice. Even bitter rivals of the TMC such as Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Left leaders have backed her cause. Chowdhury pleaded in the Lok Sabha that she be given the right to reply to the charges levelled against her. The Treasury benches ruled out Moitra's rebuttal and the motion to expel the MP was hastily adopted after an Opposition walkout. Moitra made an eloquent defence of her case on the steps of the new Parliament building flanked by a bevy of attentive Opposition leaders, including Sonia Gandhi. TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee appreciated this gesture towards her party member and it seems the I.N.D.I.A alliance is back on track, but with just months to go for the big electoral battle of 2024 the Opposition bloc has an arduous journey ahead. No common agenda has been set and if the Assembly elections are anything to go by, poll tie-ups among the various parties are unlikely to fructify. The Narendra Modi juggernaut appears to be well and truly unstoppable.

What's in a word?

The choice of "rizz" as the word of the year by the venerable Oxford University Press is as much a nod to the role of social media as the influence of Generation Z in contemporary language and usage. Rizz which is slang for "style, charm or attractiveness" as well as the "ability to attract a romantic or sexual partner" may have been derived from the word charisma. The word gained traction after an interview with popular Hollywood star Tom Holland, in which he said he had "no rizz whatsoever", went viral. It spawned a multitude of memes forcing OUP to take note of the popularity of the word.

In 2022 Oxford's word of the year was "goblin mode" which signified behaviour that was unabashedly self-indulgent, rejecting social norms. It typified attitudes in the year of Covid when people faced long spells of self-isolation. Today's post-Covid world is much more sociable and company-seeking. Hence, the choice of "rizz". In fact, the word of the year often reflects the mood of the world. In 2021 the word of the year was "vax", at a time when the world was roiled by controversy over Covid vaccines and their efficacy. In 2019 the word of the year was "climate emergency", again a reflection of the threat of global warming. What's in a word, one may ask, but what if it was to convey a wealth of meaning and typify the world one is living in?

FPJ Archives

INDIA 75 YEARS AGO
DECEMBER 12, 1948

No Censorship
At All

Printed at
The Free Press
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THE OTHER
METHOD

Three Stars Of The East
INDIA FIGHTS WITH BACK
TO THE WALL

WICKETS LOST IN SHEER
DESPERATION

THE NIZAM REFUTES
ZAFRULLAH KHAN

U. S. Asking Chiang To Make
Peace With Reds?

MEET THE STOP CHANGERS

Rubies red as red roses

ANY OTHER CLASH ON
PARADES IN INDIA

Parle's
Biscuits

HUNDREDS OF R.S.S. MEN
DEFY BANS

Round-Up All Over The
Country Continues

TEAR GAS USED IN DELHI

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Parle's
Biscuits

HUNDREDS OF R.S.S. MEN DEFY BANS ROUND-UP ALL OVER THE COUNTRY CONTINUES

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 11. One hundred R.S.S. workers were arrested today for defiance of the District Magistrate's order issued under the Punjab Public Safety Act, banning processions and public meetings within the municipal limits of Delhi.

A resounding thumbs-up to Parliament's decision

Guest Column

★ Narendra Modi

On December 11, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India delivered a historic judgment on the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35(A). Through its judgment, the Court has upheld the sovereignty and integrity of India, something that is cherished by every Indian. The Supreme Court rightly observed that the decision taken on August 5, 2019 was done with the purpose of enhancing Constitutional integration and not disintegration. The Court has also recognised the fact that Article 370 was not permanent in nature.

Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh's breathtaking landscapes, serene valleys, and majestic mountains have captivated the hearts of poets, artists and adventurers for generations. It is a place where the sublime meets the extraordinary, where the Himalayas reach for the sky, and where the pristine waters of its lakes and rivers mirror the heavens. But, for the last seven decades, these places have witnessed the worst form of violence and instability something which the wonderful people never deserved.

Unfortunately, due to centuries of colonisation, most notably economic and mental subjugation, we became a confused society of sorts. Rather than taking a clear position on very basic things, we allowed duality, leading to confusion. Sadly, Jammu and Kashmir became a big victim of such a mindset. At the time of Independence, we had a choice of making a fresh start for national integration. Instead, we decided to continue with the confused society approach even if it meant ignoring the long-term national interests.

I have had the opportunity of being connected with the Jammu and Kashmir Andolan from a very early part of my life. I belong to an ideological frame-

work where Jammu and Kashmir was not merely a political issue. But, it was about addressing the aspirations of society. Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee held an important portfolio in the Nehru Cabinet and could have remained in government for a long time. Yet, he quit the Cabinet over the Kashmir issue and preferred the tough road ahead, even if it meant paying with his life. His efforts and sacrifice led to crores of Indians becoming emotionally attached with the Kashmir issue. Years later, Atal Ji, at a public meeting in Srinagar gave the powerful message of 'Insaniyat', 'Jamhooriyat' and 'Kashmiriyat', which has also always been a source of great inspiration.

It was always my firm belief that what had happened in Jammu and Kashmir was a great betrayal to our nation and to the people living there. It was also my strong desire to do whatever I can to remove this blot, this injustice done to the people. I have always wanted to work to alleviate the suffering of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

In very basic words — Articles 370 and 35(A) were like major obstacles. It seemed like an unbreakable wall and the sufferers were the poor and down-trodden. Articles 370 and 35(A) ensured that the people of Jammu and Kashmir never got the rights and development that the rest of their fellow Indians got. Due to these Articles, a distance was created between people belonging to the same nation. Due to this distance, many people from our nation who wanted to work to solve the problems of Jammu and Kashmir were unable to do so even if they clearly felt the pain of the people there.

As a Karyakarta who has seen the issue closely over the last several decades, I had a nuanced understanding of the specifics and the complexities of the issue. Yet, I was crystal clear about one thing — that the people of Jammu and Kashmir want development and they want to contribute to the development of India based on their strengths and skills. They also want a better quality of life for their children, a life free from violence and

uncertainty.

Thus, while serving the people of Jammu and Kashmir, we gave primacy to three pillars — understanding of the citizens' concerns, building trust through supportive actions, and prioritising development, development and more development.

In 2014, just after we assumed office, deadly floods struck Jammu and Kashmir, with a lot of damage in the Kashmir valley. In September 2014, I went to Srinagar to assess the situation and also announced Rs 1,000 crore as a special assistance for rehabilitation, signalling our government's commitment to supporting the people during crises. I had the opportunity to meet people from different walks of life and there was one common thread in these interactions- the people not only wanted development but they also wanted freedom from the rampant corruption prevailing for decades. The same year, I decided not to mark Diwali in remembrance of those we lost in Jammu and Kashmir. I also decided to be in Jammu and Kashmir on Diwali day.

In order to further strengthen Jammu and Kashmir's development journey, we decided that our Government ministers would frequently go there and interact with people directly. These frequent visits also played a crucial role in building goodwill in Jammu and Kashmir. From May 2014 to March 2019, over 150 ministerial visits took place. This is a record in itself. The special package of 2015 was a significant step in addressing the developmental needs of Jammu and Kashmir. It contained initiatives for infrastructure development, job creation, tourism promotion and support to the handicraft industry.

We harnessed the power of sports in Jammu and Kashmir, recognising its potential to ignite the dreams of the youth. Through sporting initiatives, we witnessed the transformational impact of athletic pursuits on their aspirations and futures. Sporting venues were upgraded, training programmes were organised and coaches were made available. One of the most unique things was to encourage the

setting of local football clubs. The results were outstanding. The name of the talented footballer Afshan Ashiq comes to my mind — in December 2014 she was a part of a stone-pelting group in Srinagar but with the right encouragement she turned to football, she was sent for training and excelled in the game. I recall interacting with her in one of the F'it India Dialogues where I said it's time to move over 'Bend it like Beckham' because it is now 'Ace it like Afshan.' Other youngsters began to shine in kickboxing, Karate and more.

The panchayat polls were also a watershed moment in the region's quest for all-round development. Once again, we were faced with a choice of either remaining in power or standing by our principles- the choice was never tough and we let go of a Government but preferred that those ideals that we stand for, the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir are given top priority. The success of panchayat polls indicated the democratic nature of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. My mind went back to an interaction I had with Pradhans from the villages. Among other issues, I made a request to them- that at no point must schools be burnt and that must be ensured. I was delighted to see that this was adhered to. After all, if schools are burnt the biggest sufferers are the small children.

The historic day of August 5 is etched in the hearts and minds of every Indian. Our Parliament passed the historic decision to abrogate Article 370. Since then, much has changed in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The judicial court verdict came in December 2023 but seeing the wave of development across Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, the people's court have given a resounding thumbs-up to the Parliament's decision of abolishing Articles 370 and 35(A) for four years now.

At a political level, the last four years have been marked with a renewed faith in grassroots democracy. The women, tribals, SC, ST and marginalised sections of society were not getting their due. At the same time, the aspirations of Ladakh were totally ignored. August

5, 2019 changed all that. All Central laws now apply without fear or favour. Representation has also got more widespread — a three tier Panchayati Raj System is in place, BDC elections have been held, and refugee communities who were all but forgotten have begun to enjoy the fruits of development.

Key central government schemes have attained saturation levels, thus covering all sections of society. These include Saubhagya, Ujwala and Ujjwala schemes. Strides have been made in housing, tap water connection and financial inclusion. Healthcare, otherwise a major challenge for the people has witnessed an upgradation of infrastructure. All the villages achieved ODF Plus status. Government vacancies, which were otherwise a den of corruption and favouritism, have been filled in a transparent and process-driven manner. Other indicators like IMR have shown betterment. The boost to infrastructure and tourism has been for everyone to see. The credit for this naturally goes to the resilience of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have shown time and again that they want only development and are willing to be drivers of this positive change. Earlier, there was a question mark on the status of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Now, there are only exclamation marks about record growth, record development, record tourist inflow.

In its verdict on December 11, the Supreme Court has strengthened the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' — it has reminded us that what defines us is the bonds of unity and a shared commitment to good governance. Today, every child born in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh is born with a clean canvas, where he or she can paint a future full of vibrant aspirations. Today, the dreams of the people are no longer prisoners of the past but are possibilities of the future. After all, development, democracy and dignity have replaced disillusionment, disappointment and despondency.

Narendra Modi is the Prime Minister of India

Will Joe Biden attend the Republic Day parade?

Heart of the Matter

★ S N M Abdi

The uncertainties clouding United States President Joe Biden's visit to New Delhi for Republic Day celebrations is a dead giveaway of the current state of India-America relations. So far, there has been neither acceptance nor any response from the White House to the invitation extended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Biden to be the chief guest at India's biggest national event next month. The suspense in India over Biden's visit is perfectly understandable.

Importantly, the suspense has deepened after Washington called out New Delhi for trying to kill a US national — Sikh separatist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun — on its soil, and US federal prosecutors have started legal proceedings against Indian citizen Nikhil Gupta and an unnamed Indian intelligence

official for their involvement in what the Americans are officially and repeatedly calling a "lethal plot".

There is already speculation that Biden, who apparently conveyed his displeasure over the murder attempt to Modi face-to-face at least once before US authorities filed a criminal case in a Manhattan court in New York, might decline the invite citing the State of the Union address which US presidents deliver in January. Even if scheduling reasons are used to justify Biden's absence, it would still be a big snub as another US President, Barack Obama, did fly to India in January 2015.

As things now stand, Biden — whom Modi and India have gone out of their way to court — accepting Modi's invitation would be a miracle of sorts. Miracles do happen but not too often, I'm afraid. If Air Force One indeed touches down at Palam next month beating all the odds, it should be considered a triumph of New Delhi's behind-the-scenes diplomacy which would easily restore the equilibrium in bilateral relations between the world's oldest and biggest democracies.

Federal Bureau of Investigation director Christopher A Wray is in New

Delhi on a two-day visit, his first to India after he became director in 2017 — and the first visit by the FBI boss in 12 long years. Hence it would be extremely foolish to underestimate the importance of Wray's trip. He will no doubt discuss several pending cases with Dinkar Gupta, National Investigation Agency director, and other senior Indian security officials, but the Pannun 'hit job' — which is clearly casting a dark shadow on Biden's visit — certainly tops Wray's agenda in India.

The US side is openly saying from day one that it has taken the assassination bid "very seriously", and gone to the extent of characterising it as "transnational repression". At the same time, the Americans have welcomed New Delhi's decision to institute a high-level probe to get to the bottom of the sordid affair. India, on its part, has also said that it does not have a policy of carrying out such killings. But US officials are publicly demanding that those found guilty by the probe are held accountable — which is saying politely that they must be brought to justice; essentially, punished.

Wray would naturally want to see the results of India's investigation into

what the US is calling a "lethal plot". Even if the probe is not over and conclusions reached yet, the FBI director is bound to ask the Indian side to share its preliminary findings with him. As it is, Wray already knows whatever there is to know about the "lethal plot" as it was the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration which jointly penetrated and foiled it. All things considered, Wray's visit is inextricably linked to his President's. If we don't satisfy Wray, the chances of Biden's visit would inevitably dim, resulting in a major diplomatic headache for India.

Unfortunately for India, the reported assassination bid on Pannun in New York has direct links with the murder of another Sikh separatist, Hardip Singh Nijjar, in a Vancouver suburb, and both feature in the indictment in the Manhattan court which has unexpectedly complicated India-US relations. After Nijjar's murder, allegedly by Indian government agents, was flagged by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the US threw its full weight behind its North American ally and told New Delhi to cooperate with the probe into Nijjar's killing. Both cases are now weighing on Biden and he

will factor them in while taking a call on going to India.

Ashley Tellis, a friend of India who is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, says that India is unlikely to get away lightly. Without mincing his words, he has said that "it would be a mistake for New Delhi to conclude that India's importance to the US strategy for balancing against China gives India the latitude to unilaterally target US citizens."

For India, much more is at stake than merely having Biden as the chief guest at the Republic Day parade on January 26. The government is keen to schedule a Summit of Quad leaders in New Delhi the following day on January 27. If Biden decides to give India's Republic Day celebrations a miss, will the planned Quad Summit still take place? And if Biden drops out, will Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese still take the trouble of jetting to New Delhi? So, an awful lot is riding on Biden's state visit to India.

The author is an independent, Pegasus reporter and commentator on foreign policy and domestic politics

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Too-high expectations lead to student despair

The count of 13,000 student suicides in 2022 only goes to show the extent of problem that exists among the student community. Over-expectations of the parents and an inherent inability to assimilate the syllabus are likely to trigger suicidal responses. Mental health is just beginning to be recognised in India. But most parents, more so from rural India, are unable to understand the mental tensions their children can be subject to. The occasional tale of a poor backward child making it to the top fires their imagination into believing that their child too could do the same. It would be interesting to know the background of the parents of the students who have opted for this kind of exit.

Anthony Henriques, Mumbai

Desh ka Form process is frustrating!

The Election Commission has spent a fortune on releasing print ads to get

voters to register and update their ID cards. I am a senior citizen, have struggled for hours trying to get the phone number they have listed, logging on to their website or YouTube pages — no luck! I needed just an address change, but have given up. They don't even have an address listed where one can physically go and get this done. It is so unfriendly one would think they couldn't care less, as ads are enough, it seems!

Swati Bhansali, Mumbai

Running against time for green deadline

Referring to the article 'Implement Paris pact to avoid climate catastrophe' (Nov 30), it looks like they are running against time, because while developed nations have conveniently targeted India and China, Germany's share of coal power generation is 30%, up from 20% a few years ago and the US is unlikely to meet its 2030 deadline to completely phase out coal. The 2030 deadline seems to be a highly ambitious plan and the developed nations will have to walk the talk first before putting pressure on countries like India.

Bal Govind, Noida

AI for investment

Many people do not know how to utilise artificial intelligence for stock selection, focusing only on trends. But investing is not gambling. Trading in the stock market might seem easy, but finding the right entry point can be challenging without a time-tested strategy. By joining a trading group, you can gain access to a greater selection of quality stocks through artificial intelligence, potentially experiencing a financial growth of 150% before Christmas. Internal research dossiers from company professionals include strong performing stocks handpicked for over six months. Powerful AI is capable of understanding and interpreting natural language, which can be used for analysing and evaluating complex financial data such as stock prices and trends. It is reported that there is high success rate of 94%, success instilling confidence in investors to participate in stock trading for higher returns.

MR Jayanthi, Mumbai

Dear reader,
We eager to know your opinions, comments and suggestions. Write to letters@fpj.co.in with the title of the letter in the subject line. Using small mail! Send your letters to The Free Press Journal, Free Press House, Free Press Marg, 215 Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021.

LORD GANESH MESSAGE FOR THE DAY

A day to rise like a phoenix, process the unusual shocks wisely and calmly.

You will receive appreciation. Time will be spent getting in touch with the divine by doing, reading or watching spiritual content.

You will focus on paperwork, making changes or updating your social media accounts. I loved the yellow flowers.

Tip for the day: Visualise Lord Ganesha's hands on your crown chakra and say "Lord Ganesha please help me to process everything calmly & wisely, this or better thank you".

Lots of divine miracles your way, Sheetal Sapan Mhatre.

GLOBAL BULLETIN

14-yr-old held for attack on Sikh man

LONDON: The UK police have arrested a 14-year-old boy as part of their investigation of a hate crime in which a Sikh man in his late 50s sustained injuries after a group of boys attacked him in Slough, south-east England. Police said the teenager was arrested last week and has been released on police bail until February 15, 2024. The force stressed that its investigation remains active and renewed its appeal for any information linked to the attack on November 21. The victim, Inderjit Singh, was walking through Langley Memorial Park when he was approached by a group of boys. One of the offenders tried to grab the victim's beard and then all the boys circled him, kicking him and pulling him to the ground.

2 killed in Swiss town shooting

BERLIN: Two people were killed and one wounded as a gunman fired shots at two locations in a southern Swiss town on Monday, police said. The man, who hasn't yet been identified, opened fire on several people in Sion shortly before 8 am for reasons that aren't yet clear, police in Valais canton (state) said in a statement. Police said they had deployed officers to arrest the shooter. They said that he appears to have known his victims.

Trump says he will not testify

WASHINGTON: Former President Donald Trump said on Sunday that he would not testify in a New York courtroom this week, where he had been expected to appear for a second time to make the case that his company did not misrepresent the value of its properties to win favorable financing. The civil fraud trial, which began in October, is one of several legal challenges the former president faces as he mounts a comeback bid for the White House. Trump said on social media on Sunday that "I will not be testifying on Monday."

Maini crowned Miss India USA

WASHINGTON DC: Rijul Maini, a medical student from Michigan, has been crowned Miss India USA 2023 at the annual pageant held in New Jersey.

Hamas threatens hostages as Israel says group's end is near

AGENCIES / RAFAH

Hamas has threatened that not a single hostage will be allowed to leave Gaza alive unless its demands for a prisoner exchange are met, reported the BBC.

However, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says dozens of Hamas militants have surrendered and he described the situation as "the beginning of the end" for the group.

Israel has pledged to keep fighting until it removes Hamas from power, dismantles its military capabilities and returns all of the hostages taken by militants during Hamas' Oct. 7 surprise attack into Israel that ignited the war.

Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants in Gaza's two largest cities on Monday, with civilians still trapped in the fighting even after hundreds of thousands have fled to other parts of the besieged territory.

Residents said there was heavy fighting in and around the southern city of Khan Younis, where Israeli ground forces opened a new line of attack last week, and battles were still underway in parts



Israeli army tanks rolling in a field near the border with the Gaza Strip on Monday

of Gaza City and the urban Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, where large areas have been reduced to rubble.

In central Gaza, an Israeli airstrike overnight flattened a residential building where some 80 people were staying in the Maghazi refugee camp, residents said.

Ahmed al-Qarah, a neighbour, who was digging through the rubble for survivors, said he knew of only six people who made it out.

"The rest are under the building," he said.

Several of the dead were brought to a nearby hospital, where their loved ones could be seen sobbing and holding funeral prayers.

In Khan Younis, Radwa Abu Frayeh saw heavy Israeli strikes overnight around the European Hospital, where the UN humanitarian office says tens of thousands of people have sought shelter. She said one hit a home close to hers late Sunday.

"The building shook," she said. "We thought it was the end and we would die."

Hussein al-Sayyed, who fled Gaza City earlier in the war with his three daughters, is staying in a three-story home in the city with around 70 others. He said they have been rationing food for days.

The Israeli military said five soldiers were killed in a battle in southern Gaza on Sunday, after militants fired at them from a school and set off an explosive device.

Russia targets Kyiv with ballistic missiles

AP / Kyiv

Russia fired eight ballistic missiles at Kyiv early on Monday, all of which were shot down, Ukraine's Air Force said. The thwarted attack still left one person injured by shrapnel and three more suffered severe stress reactions, officials said.

A series of loud explosions rang out in Ukraine's capital just after 4 am, as the city was under its nightly curfew, followed by air raid sirens.

Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said that in Darnytskyi district of eastern Kyiv the debris of an intercepted missile fell without catching fire, and elsewhere in the capital, the explosive wave damaged the windows of a house.

The attack also left 120 households in the city without electricity, Ukraine's Ministry of Energy said.



Communal workers walk next to a crater and destroyed houses following Russian shelling in Kyiv, on Monday

aged the windows of a house.

Last winter Russian troops were deliberately targeting Ukrainian energy system causing power outages and blackouts across the country.

Putin's spy chief tells US: Ukraine will become your Vietnam

AGENCIES / MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign intelligence chief told the United States on Thursday that Western support for Ukraine would turn the conflict into a "second Vietnam," a haunting Washington for years to come, according to Reuters. The West has given Ukraine more than \$246 bil-

lion in aid and weapons, but a Ukrainian counteroffensive has failed and Russia remains in control of just under a fifth of Ukrainian territory.

"Ukraine will turn into a 'black hole,' absorbing more and more resources and people," Sergei Naryshkin, head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), said in an article in the SVR's house journal, "The

Intelligence Operative".

"Ultimately, the US risks creating a 'second Vietnam' for itself, and every new American administration will have to try to deal with it."

US President Joe Biden has warned that a direct NATO-Russia confrontation could trigger World War Three and repeatedly ruled out sending American soldiers to Ukraine.

Philippines military chief says he was aboard ship Chinese vessels rammed

AP / MANILA

The Philippine military chief said on Monday he was with Filipino forces aboard a supply boat when it was blasted with a water cannon, surrounded and bumped by Chinese coast guard ships over the weekend in the disputed South China Sea.

Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said that China was escalating its aggression in the contested waters but said it would not deter Filipino forces from defending the Philippines' territorial interests in the busy waterway.

More than 100 Chinese government and suspected militia ships have swarmed the high seas around the con-



A Chinese ship rams a Philippine navy-operated supply boat

tested Second Thomas Shoal, where a long-marooned Philippine navy ship that Brawner visited has stood for decades. He said the swarm of Chinese ships was much

bigger than in previous months. "It's pure aggression," Brawner said of China's high-seas manoeuvres. "I witnessed how many times the big Chinese coast guard

and militia ships cut our path. They water-cannoned us, then bumped us."

Brawner, the US-educated chief of the 150,000-member Armed Forces of the Philippines, joined navy personnel in a wooden-hulled supply boat, the Unnaiza Mae 1, which brought Christmas gifts, food and other supplies to a small contingent of Filipino marines and navy personnel stationed aboard the BRP Sierra Madre at the Second Thomas Shoal.

Although now crumbling with rust and holes, BRP Sierra Madre remains an actively commissioned Philippine navy ship, meaning any assault on it would be considered an act of war.

11 dead after landslides at Zambia mine

AP / LUSAKA (ZAMBIA)

Eleven informal miners have been confirmed dead and their bodies retrieved from an open-pit copper mine in Zambia after landslides buried them in tunnels they were digging last month.

One survivor has been found but up to 26 others remain missing and are feared dead nearly two weeks after the disaster.

Rescuers announced the latest death toll late on Sunday. The survivor, a 49-year-old man, was pulled out from underneath the debris last week and is recovering in the hospital, said the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit, which is overseeing the rescue operation.

Pak: India's SC verdict on Article 370 has no legal value

PTI / ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Monday said India's Supreme Court verdict upholding the abrogation of Article 370 has "no legal value", asserting that the international law does not recognise New Delhi's "unilateral and illegal actions" of August 5, 2019.

The Supreme Court on Monday unanimously upheld the Central government's decision of August 2019 to abrogate Article 370, which bestowed a special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

"International law doesn't recognise India's unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019. The judicial endorsement by the Indian Supreme Court has no legal value. Kashmiris have an in-

alienable right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant UN SC resolutions," caretaker Foreign Minister Jaiil Abbas Jilani said. Jilani said India has "no right to make unilateral decisions on the status of this disputed territory" against the will of the Kashmiri people and Pakistan. "Pakistan categorically rejects the judgment announced by the Supreme Court of India on the status of" Jammu and Kashmir, he said.

He said that the judicial endorsement of India's "unilateral and illegal actions" was "a travesty of justice".

He said that J&K is an internationally-recognised dispute, which remains on the agenda of the UN Security Council for over seven decades.

Crossword # 983

Across

1 Assumes appropriate posture before shrine (6)

7 German Shepherd (8)

8 Heating fuel (4)

10 Kampala is its capital (6)

11 Defiles or smears (6)

14 "Treasure Island" monogram (3)

16 Descendants (5)

17 Distasteful (4)

19 Figure out (5)

21 Store events (5)

22 Book of maps (5)

23 Fermented drink (4)

26 Refrain syllables (3-2)

28 Josef ____ : 1874-1935, Czech composer and violinist ? (3)

29 Cheerio (3,3)

30 Tranquil (6)

31 Was in debt (4)

32 Not in a workers' group (3-5)

33 Adolescents (6)

Down

1 Popular drama of Japan (6)

2 Equally (6)

3 Hard drive interface (4)

4 Plans of action (7)

5 New Zealanders (5)

6 Busy (2,3)

8 A recreation area (4)

9 Some promos (3)

12 Powdery residue (3)

13 Gentle push (5)

15 Religion of the Koran (5)

18 Cautious (5)

19 Comrade (3)

20 Affirmative reply (3)

21 ____ power : stamina ? (7)

22 Long white vestment (3)

23 Writing desk (6)

24 Barely managed (4)

25 Kind of monkey (6)

26 Steakhouse order (1-4)

27 Sicilian nymph - "a neat" change ? (5)

28 Fasten with needle and thread (3)

30 Japanese electronics giant (4)

Solution

Across: 1 Kneels, 7 Aislan, 8 Peak, 10 Uganda, 11 Stains, 14 RL5, 16 Issue, 17 Ash, 18 Nidge, 19 Pda, 20 Yes, 21 Sany, 22 Ab, 23 Breaun, 24 Kex, 25 Rhesus, 26 T-bone, 27 Aetha, 28 Sew, 30 Sony.

Down: 1 Kebab, 2 Evely, 3 Sear, 4 Pacis, 5 Kivis, 6 In use, 8 Pak, 9 Ads, 10 K, 11 K, 12 K, 13 K, 14 K, 15 K, 16 K, 17 K, 18 K, 19 K, 20 K, 21 K, 22 K, 23 K, 24 K, 25 K, 26 K, 27 K, 28 K, 29 K, 30 K, 31 K, 32 K, 33 K.

FPJ - SUDOKU - 85 Level: Hard

1	5					7
		7		5		4
			1	4		9
			7		6	
	1	2	6		4	7
		6		3		
	4			8	3	
8				6		
9						8
						3

WHAT TO DO:

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only one correct solution.

YOUR DAY By Vinayak Vishwas Karandikar

ARIES: Focus on studies and career today. Expect expenditure for advertising or communication. People in fields like travel & publication will be benefited. Mother's ill health is indicated. Good day to join career oriented courses. Some of you suffer from skin problem.

LIBRA: Today is a day to travel. Expect expenditure for travel and education. People in fields like law and marketing will be benefited. Job transfer is indicated. You may go for a long journey. Some people may suffer from throat pain.

TAURUS: Today loss is indicated so plan accordingly. Expect expenditure for children and premiums. People in fields like networking and journalism will get success. Dispute with family is likely. Some of you may have a throat infection.

GEMINI: Today is the day to study and earn. You may spend on vehicle or business. People in fields like communication and publication will benefit. A good day for doing household activities. Some of people may suffer from toothache.

CANCER: Today is a day to travel and invest. Expenses for communication and health are indicated. People in fields like tourism and communication will get success. Long journey or isolation of family member is indicated. Some may suffer from cough and cold.

LEO: Today you will get maturity of your investments. Expect expenditure for travel or medical treatment. People in fields like finance and consultancy will be benefited. Enjoy a good time with family. Some people may suffer from cough.

VIRGO: Today is the day to focus on your career. Expect expenditure on communication and education. People in fields like communication and publication will be benefited. Today you can balance family and work time. You may have knee pain.

SCORPIO: Problems in higher education are indicated. Expenses on education and travel are indicated. People in fields like networking and journalism will get success. Dispute with or ill health of father is indicated. Some people may suffer from skin problems or cough.

SAGITTARIUS: Today is a day for struggle and loss. Expect expenditure for business or insurance premium. People in fields like publication and communication will get success. You may not give attention to your family due to job responsibility. Some people may have indigestion.

CAPRICORN: Today is the day to travel and gain in business. Expenses for education and business are indicated. People in fields like medicine, communication and publication will be benefited. Travel with or ill health of spouse is indicated. Throat pain will indicate.

AQUARIUS: Loss is indicated, so plan accordingly. Look out for damage or injury. Expect expenses for children. People in fields like insurance and communication will have success. Family dispute is indicated. Some of you may suffer from bronchitis.

PISCES: Today is a day for celebrations or reunion. Expenses on children and entertainment are indicated. People in fields like sports and publication will be benefited. Family get-together is indicated. Some people may have cough.

Sunak apologises to Covid-hit families as he faces inquiry

PTI / London

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday apologised to the families who lost loved ones in the Covid pandemic as he opened his evidence to an ongoing public inquiry in a tough week, which will also see him tackle a feared revolt over a parliamentary vote on his Rwanda policy to deport illegal migrants.

The British Indian leader said he was "deeply sorry" about the lives lost and stressed that he wanted to give his evidence to the Covid inquiry in the spirit of "constructive candour" so that lessons can be learnt from when he was chancellor of the exchequer 2020-21.

At several points, he also defended Boris Johnson's decision-making pressures as prime minister at the time, saying he met his former boss even more than his wife Akshata Murty during the height of the first Covid lockdown period.

"I just wanted to start by saying how deeply sorry I am to all of those who lost loved ones, family members



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak arrives at the UK Covid Inquiry, in west London, on Monday

through the pandemic and also all those who suffered in various ways throughout the pandemic and as a result of the actions that were taken," said Sunak.

"I've thought a lot about this over the past couple of years, it's important we learn the lessons so we can be better prepared in the future. It is in that spirit, and with the utmost respect for all of those who were affected that I'm here today. I look forward to giving evidence in the spirit of constructive candour to help the inquiry with

its deliberations," he said.

The inquiry barrister, Hugo Keith, then took Sunak through the entire timeline of the Covid pandemic decisions, starting from the first lockdown which was declared in March 2020. He was questioned about some missing WhatsApp messages, to which the UK prime minister claimed they were lost in the process of him changing his phone multiple times in recent years and also that he is not a "prolific" user of the messaging service for government business.

SHOOTING OF SIKH FAMILY

Canadian cops: Attack a possible case of mistaken identity

PTI / Ottawa

A Sikh family from India, who was targeted last month in a shooting spree in the Canadian province of Ontario that killed one person, was possibly a case of mistaken identity, provincial police have said.

Jagtar Singh, 57, was killed while his wife Harbhajan Kaur, 55, and their daughter were critically injured during a shooting on Mayfield Road near Airport Road, along the Caledon-Brampton border, on November 21.

Officers from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and paramedics upon arrival found Jagtar Singh dead on the scene, and rushed Kaur and their daughter to hospital with life-threatening injuries, the Toronto Star newspaper reported on Monday. Officers are investigating "all aspects, including whether or not the victims of this crime were intended targets or not", OPP Detective Inspector Brian McDermott said.

'World pins hope on India to solve climate crisis'

PTI / DUBAI

The world is pinning hope on India's leadership and intellectual powerhouse for providing a solution to the climate crisis, Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland has said.

Scotland said she waits in "joyful anticipation to see what India will decide to do", as negotiators at the summit haggle over the best ways to slash greenhouse gas emis-

sions to avoid the worsening of already severe climate impacts.

Asked about her expectations from India amid a growing push for a fossil fuel phaseout, she said India has to "feed and care for 1.4 billion people", almost half of the population of the 56-nation club called Commonwealth.

"What I am hoping for is that India will have the courage to own her position and to lead, and she can. The

genius that is coming out of India, along with the other Commonwealth countries, could enable us to solve this problem," Scotland said.

"India absolutely represents hope... The Commonwealth is grateful to it for coming up with some of the most amazing solutions," she said and hoped the country would continue to maintain her position of leadership.

Scotland emphasised that the world needs a "just transi-

tion", which means transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables in a fair and equitable way. "We all accept that this cannot happen with a snap of our fingers. We have got to plan it fairly," she said.

Marvelling at India's tech revolution, she said the South Asian nation has not only taken millions of people out of poverty but also reached the 'south side' of Moon by spending just a minuscule amount compared to West. 0

Wiffen sets men's 800-freestyle short course world record

Otopeni (Romania): Irish swimmer Daniel Wiffen set a short course world record in the 800-meter freestyle, beating Grant Hackett's previous mark by almost three seconds. Wiffen finished in 7 minutes, 20.46 seconds to

take gold at the European Short Course Swimming Championships in Otopeni, Romania. Australia's Hackett had held the record for 15 years after swimming 7:23.42 at the Victoria Championships on July 20, 2008. —AP



MUMBAI | TUESDAY | DECEMBER 12, 2023 www.freepressjournal.in

RAIN DAMPENS CRICKET AUDITIONS

Indian youngsters await clear skies in second T20I against South Africa

PTI / Gqeberha (South Africa)

The stage is set, but the rain gods seem determined to play spoilsport as India gears up for the second T20I clash against South Africa.

Following a washout in the series opener, the stakes are high for the Indian youngsters vying for a spot in the T20 World Cup squad scheduled for June.

With only five games remaining before the crucial tournament, the management faces a race against time to assess players, making IPL form a pivotal factor in the selection process for the upcoming campaigns in the USA and the Caribbean. Will the weather gods favour the cricketing audition this time around?

The selectors announced a 17-man squad for the series and it is highly un-

likely that all of them would get an opportunity in the remaining two games.

Shubman Gill, who was not part of the T20 series against Australia held right after the World Cup, Suryakumar Yadav and Rinku Singh seem to be the only certainties in the batting order for the ICC event six months later.

Both Yashasvi Jaiswal and Ruturaj Gaikwad have got runs under their belt but if Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma make themselves available for the World Cup, the two fringe players would need a sensational effort in the IPL to make the cut.

The only other series India play before the World Cup is against Afghanistan at home next month.

The selectors will be forced to consider only IPL performance for World Cup selection, raising questions over



the scheduling of India's T20 commitments before the World Cup.

Like Rinku, Jitesh Sharma is also being seen as the finisher for India in the shortest format. After showing prom-

ise against Australia, Jitesh will be hoping for game time against the Proteas.

The extra bounce on South Africa pitches will pose a stiff test for the young batting line-up.

TEAMS: India: S Yadav (c), Y Jaiswal, S Gill, R Gaikwad, T Varma, R Singh, S Iyer, I Kishan (wk), J Sharma (wk), R Jadeja (VC), W Sundar, R Bishnoi, K Yadav, A Singh, M Siraj, M Kumar, D Chahar. South Africa: A Markram (c), O Baartman, M Breetzke, N Burger, G Coetzee, D Ferreira, R Hendricks, M Jansen, H Klaasen, K Maharaj, D Miller, A Phehlukwayo, T Shamsi, T Stubbs, and L Williams.

Gavaskar slams Cricket South Africa

First T20I was abandoned without toss

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / Mumbai

Former India captain and legendary batter Sunil Gavaskar has slammed Cricket South Africa following the wash out of the 1st T20I between South Africa and India due to persistent rains in Durban on Sunday, December 10.

The first T20I between hosts South Africa and visiting Team India was abandoned without a toss. The on-field umpires waited for two hours after the scheduled toss time and were compelled to call off the

match due to wet pitch conditions.

Speaking to Star Sports, Gavaskar didn't leave the opportunity to denounce Proteas cricket board, stating that the entire ground should have been covered. He is of the opinion that every cricket board has been provided with money to buy covers to refrain the pitch from getting wet due to rains.

"If the ground remains uncovered and the rain stops, you know it doesn't start for another one hour. Suddenly it rains again. So



there's no play whatsoever. Everybody (cricket boards) is getting a lot of money. Let's make no mistake." the former India captain said.

"All the cricket boards have got plenty of money. If they say they don't, they are

lying. They might not have as much money as the BCCI. Fair enough. But every board has got money to buy these covers to cover the entire ground," he added.

Sunil Gavaskar has provided an example on how

“What the boards need to do now is to cover the entire ground. Let's have no excuse. I remember there was one Test match at Eden Gardens called off where there was some problem as the game didn't start

— Sunil Gavaskar, former Indian cricketer

T20 schedule

The second to be staged in Gqeberha on Tuesday and the third in Johannesburg on Dec 14.

“Next game, Eden Gardens had the entire ground covered of. That is the kind of initiative that you want to have. Sourav Ganguly was the man in charge and he made sure that nobody could point the finger at Eden Gardens,” Gavaskar further added.

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly served as the president of Cricket Associate of Bengal from 2015 and 2019 when he took the initiative of having the entire ground at Eden Gardens to shield the field from getting wet due to rains.

Rohit's place not guaranteed

Rahul Dravid's tenure to be finalised after South Africa tour

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / Mumbai

The cricketing world is abuzz with speculation as BCCI Secretary, Jay Shah, sidesteps questions regarding Rohit Sharma's role in the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup.

While reports suggest Sharma's reluctance for T20 international cricket, the board remains tight-lipped on efforts to persuade him to lead the squad.

Shah hints at impending decisions on the coaching staff post the South Africa tour, leaving fans and pundits on the edge of their seats, anticipating the unfolding drama in Indian cricket.

There were also rumours that the Indian board is trying to convince Rohit to lead the team in the T20 World Cup but Shah refused to provide any clarity on this issue.

India's defeat in the T20 World Cup 2022 against England in Adelaide was Rohit's last match in the shortest format for the national team. He has been rested

for the upcoming T20Is and ODIs vs South Africa but will join the squad before the Test series later this month.

"What is the need to have clarity right now? We have the IPL before that and also the series against Afghanistan," Jay Shah told reporters on the sidelines of the WPL 2024 auction in Mumbai on Saturday.

Meanwhile, turnaround time between World Cup and South Africa tour was so short that despite giving Rahul

Dravid and his team extension, the tenure couldn't be formalised, something that will happen once they are back from SA Shah.

"We have given the extension but we are yet to finalise the contract. We did not get time at all, they finished (with the World Cup). I had a meeting with them (Dravid & Co.) and we agreed mutually that they will continue, decide once they return from South Africa," the secretary said.

Shah also provided an update on Hardik Pandya, who was ruled out with an ankle injury mid-way into the ICC World Cup in November.

Hardik had torn ligament of his left ankle while trying to stop a powerful hit off his own bowling during a World Cup match against Bangladesh in Pune, ruling him out of the remainder of the tournament. "We are monitoring it on a day-to-day basis. He is at NCA only, he is working very hard and we will let you know," Shah said.



IMPACT PLAYER AMANJOT EARN'S PRAISE

Her all-round heroics helped India register a five-wicket win

PTI / Mumbai

India fielding coach Munish Bali has described **Amanjot Kaur** as an 'impact player' after her all-round heroics helped the hosts register a consolation win in the third and final women's T20I against England here.

India defeated England by five wickets in the third match after losing the first two T20Is comprehensively in the

three-match series.

On Sunday, Amanjot not only hit the winning runs for India but also produced impactful performances

throughout the course of the game as she returned 2 for 25 in her three overs and also took a splendid catch.

India were in a tricky situation after a couple of quick wickets fell and 11 runs were required to win in the last two overs.

Amanjot hit 13 of just four balls, includ-

ing three boundaries, to finish the game with six balls to spare.

"She's an impact player; if you see she bowled the fourth over in the powerplay and bowled very well," Bali told the media after the conclusion of the series.

"She fielded very well. She bowled for 3-4 overs yesterday (on Saturday during second T20I) and made an immediate impact with a brilliant catch. When we were chasing today (on Sunday), 12 off 12 balls, the first ball she (faced was) whipped through the covers."

AMANJOT KAUR
13
RUNS
04
DELIVERIES
03
Boundaries

Cricket fever to grip SA

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / Mumbai

Cricketing spotlight shifts to South Africa as the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2024 prepares to unfold its magic across the nation's iconic venues, according to the ICC release.

In all 41 action-packed matches, culminating in a gripping final showdown in Benoni on February 11. The recently revealed schedule showcases a dynamic format, including a Super Six stage, ensuring a riveting journey for fans and a platform for the rising stars of world cricket.

One can anticipate a clash of titans, with the hosts kicking off against the West Indies and defending champions India facing off against 2020 victors Bangladesh. South Africa's successful hosting track record, highlighted by recent milestones, sets the stage for a cricket spectacle like no other. As the cricketing extravaganza unfolds, the hosts kick off the competition in Potchefstroom against the West Indies on the inaugural day, while reigning champions India against Bangladesh, a day later.

Harshal, Shardul in top base

PTI / New Delhi

Seamers Harshal Patel and Shardul Thakur along with veteran pacer Umesh Yadav are the three Indian capped players who are in the highest base price bracket of Rs 2 crore with 333 players vying for 77 slots during the Indian Premier League auction scheduled in Dubai on December 19.

Harshal, during an auction two years back, had gone for Rs 10.75 crore, after a stellar IPL season that also saw him get into the national team.

The IPL Governing Council

handed the franchise a list of 1166 and after all the franchises gave their wish-list, it was pruned to 333. Out of them, 214 are Indians and 119 are overseas and two from associate nations. The 10 franchises can collectively spent up to Rs 262.95 crore.

IPL AUCTION

Among the 77 slots available, 30 are earmarked for overseas players and Australians will once again be in demand although likes of World Cup winning skipper Pat Cummins, final hero Travis Head, keeper Jos Inglis,

star pacer Mitchell Starc are all in Rs 2 crore category.

Someone, on whom all eyes will be trained is New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra, who has a modest base price of Rs 50 lakh. Among the South African players, who could attract attention are pacer Gerald Coetzee and batter Rassie van der Dussen.

Someone who can evoke a lot of interest will be unknown keeper-batter from England Tom Kohler Cadmore, who has a base price of Rs 40 lakh and has been known for his big-hitting prowess across the leagues.

FROM GUWAHATI MASTERS GLORY TO OLYMPIC ASPIRATIONS ALONG WITH HER TALENTED PARTNER TANISHA CRASTO

DAZZLING DISPLAY OF ASHWINI PONNAPPA BRINGS TRIUMPH

PTI / New Delhi

In a dazzling display of skill and determination, 34-year-old badminton maestro Ashwini Ponnappa, along with her talented partner Tanisha Crasto, clinched their third women's doubles title and a second Super 100 crown at the Guwahati Masters.

Their stellar victory against Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun and Yu Chien Hui propels them into the lime-light and sets the stage for even greater ambitions.

With the taste of success fresh on their rackets, Ponnappa now sets her sights on sustaining this momentum, harboring dreams of a tri-

umphant journey to the Olympics in Paris. The thrilling saga of Ponnappa's recent triumph unfolds, marking the beginning of a new chapter in her badminton odyssey. Their exploits in Guwahati will lift them to world No. 23 when the BWF ranking is issued on Tuesday, taking them closer to top 16, which is the cut mark for the Paris Games.

"...the goal of course is to play at the Olympics but since we are a new pair, our focus is to do well in every single tournament we are playing, to put up a good show and that is what we are focusing on right now," said the two-time Olympian, Ashwini. "I think there are a lot of fac-



tors to get to the Olympics, and for us it is important to simplify our journey and focus on our performance, and if we are meant to be in the Olympics, then it's fine."

Currently, world No. 19 pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly are the frontrunners in the Olympic race.

Ashwini and Tanisha had won the Abu Dhabi Masters Super 100 and Nantes International Challenge also this year.

"Now, we will get an entry into bigger tournaments. We actually started off the year playing in a Super 500 event (Indonesian Masters) where we reached the quarterfinals, that gave us a lot of confidence because it was our first tournament together.

“... the goal of course is to play at the Olympics but since we are a new pair, our focus is to do well in every single tournament we are playing, to put up a good show and that is what we are focusing on right now

— Ashwini Ponnappa, Indian badminton player

"Now, having had this journey of playing smaller tournaments and gradually working our way up, it gives us a lot of confidence. We have a lot of matches under our belt. So, now, the idea is to take all this positivity into next year but before that our focus is giving our best in Odisha."

One of India's finest doubles exponents, Ashwini has enjoyed a lot of success with Jwala Gutta, winning the 2011 World Championships

bronze and gold and silver medals at the 2010 and 2014 Commonwealth Games respectively.

Ashwini and Jwala had also participated in the 2012 and 2016 Olympics in London and Rio de Janeiro but couldn't cross the group stage on both the occasions.

After the 2016 Games, the duo parted ways and Ashwini forged an alliance with N Sikki Reddy. The pair parted ways last year.



Advani scores easy win over Peter Paul of RSPB in snooker nationals

Chennai: Multiple-time world champion and two-time Asian Games gold medallist Pankaj Advani of PSPB recorded breaks of 103, 107 and 134 to register a comfortable 4-0 win over Peter Paul of RSPB in

the round-robin league phase of the 90th National Billiards & Shrikishna Suryanarayan too began his campaign in men's snooker in dominant fashion to score 4-0 win over Md Tausif of Chhattisgarh.

SPORTS CAFE

Jason Day, Lydia Ko win mixed event



Naples: Lydia Ko hit a fairway metal to 8 feet to set up the birdie she and Jason Day needed to win the Grant Thornton Invitational. They closed with a 6-under 66 in modified fourballs to capture the first mixed-team event in 24 years. Playing the par-5 17th hole, Ko and Day were tied with the Canadian duo of Corey Connors and Brooke Henderson, who had to settle for two closing pars and a 63. The format allowed for both players to hit tee shots, then switch to the other player's golf ball and finish out the hole. Day was in a bunker left of the green at the par-5 17th, no easy up-and-down. Ko had 208 into a slight wind and her fairway metal never left its target. It landed near the hole and rolled out about 8 feet. Her eagle putt never had a chance, but the hard work was done. Both secured easy pars on the 18th to finish at 26-under 190.

Pep issues update on injured players

Bedfordshire: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has given a fitness update on forwards Erling Haaland and Jeremy Doku as the pair were absent for the 2-1 win over Luton Town at Kenilworth Road. Haaland has been ruled out of Sunday's trip to Luton Town due to a 'stress' issue with his foot while Doku didn't feature because of a 'muscular' problem that also kept him out of the Aston Villa game on Wednesday. "Stress, no fracture. Please don't ask if he broke his foot. It's just stress. We have to take it day by day, week by week. He could be ready for Crystal Palace, hopefully he will be ready for Saudi Arabia," said Guardiola on Haaland's injury. Haaland is the Premier League's top scorer with 14 goals and had not missed a match in the competition this season. He has missed just three Premier League matches since joining City in the summer of 2022.

Indian hockey teams leave for Valencia

Bengaluru: Indian men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh has set his eyes on climbing up the FIH rankings, while his female counterpart Savita hopes to iron out the kinks ahead of next month's Olympic Qualifiers at the 5 Nations tournament in Spain. Both the Indian hockey teams will begin their campaign against Spain in Valencia on December 15. For the men, the tournament will serve as a preparatory event ahead of the 2023-24 Hockey Pro League season. India will play against Spain, Germany, France and Belgium during the tournament. The event also gains significance for the women's team as it will serve as the preparatory assignment ahead of the all-important Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi beginning January 13. The women's team will take on Spain in the first game before taking on Belgium on December 16, Germany on December 19, and Ireland in their last match on December 21.

Tennis Premier League starts today

Pune: Tennis fans are gearing up for a season of electrifying rallies, heart-stopping volleys, and nail-biting finishes! The much-awaited Season 5 of Tennis Premier League (TPL) powered by Clear is all set to kick off on 12th December 2023 at the majestic Balewadi Stadium in Pune and promises a spectacle of top-tier tennis action.

Girona trounce Barca

Score 4-2 to go top as Spanish League title contenders

MADRID

Girona made its strong case to be considered a genuine contender for the Spanish league title by beating Catalan rival Barcelona 4-2 and overtaking Real Madrid at the top of the standings.

Ukraine forwards Artem Dovbyk and Viktor Tsygankov teamed up for Girona's opener, and Miguel Gutierrez, Valery Fernández and Cristhian Stuani scored a goal each to seal the away victory against the defending league champions. Robert Lewandowski and Ilkay Gundogan scored Barcelona's goals.



The statement win moved Girona two points ahead of Madrid, which drew 1-1 with Real Betis on Saturday. Barcelona dropped to fourth place, seven points behind its regional rival and five behind Madrid. Atletico Madrid regained third place with a 2-1 win over last-place Almeria to extend its winning streak at home in the league to 17 matches. Atletico has the same 34 points as Barcelona with a game in hand.

Barcelona had never lost in six matches against Girona in the league, with four wins and two draws.

"Girona deserves a lot of credit. It has a great team," Barcelona coach Xavi Hernández said. "It was an even match, it could have gone either way. It also would have been a fair result if we had won it."

Girona, partly owned by Manchester City's Abu Dhabi ownership, never

looked like the minnow club against Barcelona on Sunday, showing maturity and poise from the start at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium.

The team coached by Michel Sánchez, sporting a white and blue uniform with similar colors to Man City, has been playing some of the best soccer in Spain and holding on to its position near the top from the start of the season.

ANUJ KORE'S SPIN MAGIC

Unravels Swami Vivekanand International batters in Harris Shield with 4 wickets

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / Mumbai



In a gripping showdown at the Cricket Club of India, left-arm spinner **Anuj Kore** stole the spotlight with a stellar performance, claiming four crucial wickets.

His exceptional spell left Swami Vivekanand International, Borivali, reeling at 288 in their opening innings against General Education Academy, Chembur, setting the stage for an intense battle in the three-day Harris Shield inter-school final.

And when the stumps were drawn, Chembur boys were 12-0 in the three overs they played against spin attack.

Kore's tall frame proved instrumental in claiming crucial wickets, including the dismissal of Chembur's skipper

Arjun Lotlikar, tipping the scales in favour of the Chembur boys during his 25-over spell. Initially positioned comfortably at 130 with steady openers, Borivali's fortunes took a downturn as they experienced a sudden collapse, losing wickets at regular intervals.

Despite a commendable effort by the openers, the loss of Vedant Nirmal triggered a collapse, leading to Borivali's total score of 288. Vivekanand International coach Mahesh Lotlikar, speaking to FPJ after the match, acknowledged the good performance of the openers but expressed disappointment at the subsequent collapse.

In the absence of regular coach Dinesh Lad, who is with the Mumbai under-16 team, stand-in coach Lotlikar remained confident that his

bowlers would bounce back the next day, turning the first-innings total into a formidable challenge.

The first session saw General Education Academy initially dominating, with openers poised for a substantial total. "It was a wise decision by their skipper to bat, and the openers did well," remarked Aniket Surve, the General Education Academy coach. However, Vivekanand's breakthrough led to the fall of nine wickets, adding just over 150 runs. Surve acknowledged the flat wicket and praised spinner Kore's impactful 25-over spell, where he conceded 75 runs while securing four wickets. Looking ahead, Surve expressed confidence that his batters would perform well and secure the first-innings lead.

India face tough Dutch test

PTI / Kuala Lumpur

Two-time champions India will need to raise their game by a few notches while curbing complacency during their quarter-final encounter against a formidable Netherlands in the men's Junior World Cup hockey tournament here on Tuesday.



India won the tournament twice in 2001 in Hobart, Australia and at home in Lucknow in 2016. Besides they were runners-up once way back in 1997 in Milton Keynes, England, losing 2-3 against Australia in the final.

The Indians started the tournament on a bright note, beating Korea 4-1 and then

suffered a 1-4 defeat at the hands of Spain before getting their acts together to thrash Canada 10-1 in their final pool match.

India sealed their quarter-final place as the second-placed team from Pool C with two wins out of three games behind Spain, who had an all-win record.

The Netherlands, on the other hand, finished atop Pool D with two wins and a draw.

Having started off on a positive note, the Indians were taken to the cleaners by Spain, who relied on crisp, short passes to create spaces in the Indian defence which worked perfectly for them.

Building No. 39 retain title

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / Mumbai

Building No. 39 for the second consecutive year as they clinched the Maitri-Ratna Chashak 2023- Season 2 title, overcoming Building No. 40 on December 10.

Opting to field after winning the toss, Building No. 40 faced tough luck as Building No. 39 set a challenging target of 36 runs, losing only two wickets. Despite their efforts,

Building No. 40 fell short, getting all out with just 18 runs on the board.

The Sunil Mitra Mandal of Ravi-Kiran CHS, Building No. 24, Abhyudaya Nagar, orchestrated a three-day (December 8-10) underarm box cricket tournament, one of South Bombay's most significant events. The competition featured 32 teams from across Mumbai, drawing a massive crowd of cricket enthusiasts.



The enduring allure of Trompe L’oeil in interior design

A timeless fusion of art and decor

RIA MUKHERJEE

In the world of interior design, where trends come and go, some elements stand the test of time, captivating the imagination and transcending stylistic shifts. One such timeless and captivating technique is Trompe L’Oeil, a French term meaning “deceive the eye.” This artistic approach involves creating optical illusions that trick viewers into perceiving painted or wallpapered surfaces as three-dimensional, opening up a world of creative possibilities for interior designers.

The renaissance of Trompe L’Oeil in interior design:

In contemporary interior design, Trompe L’Oeil has experienced a renaissance, gaining popularity for its ability to transform mundane surfaces into visually dynamic focal points. Designers have embraced this technique to create illusions ranging from faux windows and doors to intricate molding and architectural details. Trompe L’Oeil allows for a seamless integration of art into functional spaces, blurring the lines between aesthetics and utility.



Historical roots:

Trompe L’Oeil has a rich historical lineage, dating back to ancient Greece and Rome, where artists used the technique to create stunning murals that mimicked architectural elements. During the Renaissance, artists like Andrea Mantegna and Leonardo da Vinci elevated Trompe L’Oeil to new heights, using it to add depth and realism to their masterpieces. Over the centuries, the technique continued to evolve, finding its way into interior spaces.

Versatility in applications:

One of the most significant advantages of Trompe L’Oeil lies in its versatility. Designers can apply this technique to various surfaces, including walls, ceilings, and even floors, breathing life into otherwise overlooked spaces. Whether in residential homes, commercial spaces, or public buildings, Trompe L’Oeil adds a touch of sophistication and whimsy, transcending the boundaries of conventional interior design.

Trompe L’Oeil in modern wallpaper:

As technology advances, Trompe L’Oeil has found a natural home in modern wallpaper design. High-quality, digitally printed wallpapers can replicate the intricate details and nuances of traditional hand-painted murals, offering a more accessible and cost-effective way to incorporate this timeless technique into contemporary interiors. The marriage of technology and artistry has expanded the reach of Trompe L’Oeil, making it accessible to a broader audience.

The illusion of space:

For smaller spaces or rooms with limited architectural features, Trompe L’Oeil offers a brilliant solution. By creating the illusion of depth and space, designers can visually expand cramped quarters and enhance the overall perception of a room. Faux windows with picturesque landscapes or imaginary doorways leading to enchanting gardens are popular choices, providing a delightful escape within the confines of four walls.

Customization and personalization:

Trompe L’Oeil also lends itself well to customization, allowing designers to tailor their creations to the preferences and personalities of their clients. From trompe l’oeil wallpaper featuring intricate patterns and designs to bespoke murals that tell a unique story, the possibilities are endless. This personal touch transforms interior spaces into one-of-a-kind works of art that resonate with the inhabitants.



MONIKA KHAJURIA

For our skin to be at its best, a carefully curated skincare routine is essential. Skincare enthusiasts often stress the importance of tailoring your routine to what works best for your skin, emphasizing that identical products may yield opposite results for different skin types or individuals. The key lies in observing how your skin responds to each addition or change in your routine, ensuring it feels better than before. It’s advised to introduce one product at a time to understand its impact. With the tempting luxury of skincare products and advice from supposed “skincare experts,” it’s simple to miss signs that your skincare routine might not be right for your skin. Keep an eye out for three big signs and other smaller signals, suggesting it’s time to rethink and maybe change your current skincare routine.



Decoding skincare routine red flags

Signs your regimen needs a revamp



1 Your skin feels dull and tight

Dull skin can be a clear indicator of ineffective skincare, often stemming from inadequate hydration and essential nutrients. Optimal moisturization is pivotal in maintaining the skin’s beauty and softness. If you notice your skin feeling tight and lackluster, it’s time to elevate your moisturizing game. Consider incorporating a rich moisturizer into your routine, applying it twice daily—morning and night.

2 Frequent acne breakouts

Unexplained and recurrent acne breakouts, not associated with hormonal fluctuations, may be an indication that your skincare routine needs scrutiny. Clogged pores, excess sebum production, and bacterial infestation are common culprits behind acne. An effective skincare routine can manage these issues. If breakouts persist outside your usual hormonal fluctuations, closely evaluate your skincare routine to identify potential causes disrupting your skin’s balance.

3 Your makeup appears cracked

While cracked makeup is commonly attributed to poor application skills, it can also be a sign of underlying skincare issues. Makeup adheres seamlessly to well-hydrated and cleansed skin, offering a flawless finish. If your skin feels dry or your pores are clogged, achieving a smooth makeup application becomes challenging. This is a cue to reevaluate and possibly update your skincare routine to enhance skin texture and hydration.



Additional signs to watch for:

Persistent redness or irritation

Continuous redness or irritation, especially after introducing a new product, suggests that your skin may be sensitive to certain ingredients. Review the product labels for potential irritants and consider patch testing new products before incorporating them into your routine.

Uneven Skin Texture

If you notice an uneven texture, such as rough patches or flakiness, it may indicate a lack of exfoliation or the need for a different exfoliation method. Incorporating a gentle exfoliant into your routine can help slough off dead skin cells and promote smoother skin.

Changes in Skin Sensitivity

Sudden changes in how your skin reacts to products—becoming more sensitive or reactive—could indicate an adverse reaction. Be mindful of any tingling, burning, or itching sensations and discontinue the use of products causing discomfort.

What to do?

Simplify your routine:

If you’re experiencing issues, consider simplifying your routine. Strip it down to the basics, focusing on a gentle cleanser, a nourishing moisturizer, and a reliable sunscreen.

Patch test new products:

Before fully incorporating a new product into your routine, perform a patch test on a small area of skin to check for any adverse reactions.

Consult a dermatologist:

If problems persist, seek professional advice. A dermatologist can analyze your skin and recommend products or treatments tailored to your specific needs.

Hydrate and Nourish:

Boost hydration by drinking enough water and incorporating hydrating products into your routine. Consider adding a hydrating serum or mask to address dryness.

Regularly Assess and Adjust:

Our skin’s needs change over time. Regularly assess your skincare routine and adjust it according to the seasons, hormonal changes, or any specific skin concerns that arise. Taking proactive steps in response to these signs ensures that you adapt your skincare regimen to meet the evolving needs of your skin, promoting a radiant and healthy complexion over time.

Safeguarding children’s smiles in the face of daily indulgences

Safeguarding your kids’ smiles against the backdrop of daily indulgences involve a delicate balance between allowing enjoyment and ensuring responsible habits. In a world teeming with sugary temptations and sedentary habits, preserving dental health becomes a crucial aspect of nurturing our children’s overall well-being. Amidst the allure of candies, sodas, and processed snacks, instilling good dental hygiene habits early on forms the cornerstone of protecting those precious smiles. Regular brushing with fluoride toothpaste, flossing, and routine dental check-ups stands as pillars in the fortress against cavities and oral health issues. Education plays a pivotal role in this safeguarding mission. Empowering kids with knowledge about the impacts of excessive sugar intake and the significance of maintaining oral hygiene fosters a sense of responsibility. It’s not just about restricting treats but rather fostering an understanding of balance and moderation.



DR. KARISHMA JARADI
Head Dental Surgeon - Dentz Dental



As a parent, caregiver, or mentor, leading by example carries immense weight. Demonstrating healthy eating habits, maintaining consistent dental care routines, and showcasing an enthusiasm for physical activities can significantly influence children. Encouraging outdoor play and engaging in activities that promote movement not only benefit their physical health but also contribute to their dental well-being.

Yet, the reality often confronts us with an array of challenges. Peer pressure, marketing strategies targeting children, and the omnipresence of unhealthy food options can make this journey difficult. Striking a balance between allowing occasional indulgences and setting boundaries becomes necessary. Instead

of outright denial, consider framing treats as occasional rewards or part of special occasions while emphasizing the importance of moderation. Moreover, reimagining snacks and meals can make a significant difference. Opting for healthier alternatives like fruits, vegetables, nuts, and dairy products not only contribute to overall nutrition but also promote dental health. Choosing water over sugary drinks not only keeps them hydrated but also protects their teeth from prolonged exposure to sugar. Creating a supportive environment at home and in the community aids in reinforcing these habits. Collaborating with schools to promote healthier cafeteria options, organizing informative sessions, or initiating dental health campaigns can influence

a broader spectrum of children beyond the confines of home. Technology, while often blamed for sedentary habits, can also be harnessed positively. Engaging educational apps or interactive tools that impart knowledge about dental care in a fun and informative manner can pique children’s interest and encourage them to actively participate in their oral health journey. Ultimately, safeguarding kids’ smiles amidst daily indulgences isn’t about complete abstinence but about empowering them with the tools to make informed choices. It’s about fostering a positive relationship with oral health, emphasizing the joy of a healthy smile, and steering them towards a balanced lifestyle where occasional indulgences complement responsible habits. By embracing this holistic approach, we pave the way for our children to flaunt radiant smiles that mirror their overall well-being.



PRAVEEN KUMAR

All of us wash the fruits or vegetables that we buy from the store. Why do we do that? Well, in order to remove the dust, bacteria and even pesticides that are sprayed on them. Most of the vegetables do contain the residue of chemicals on them. They might harm your health in many ways in the long run. Washing them thoroughly and cutting areas which have mold can prevent your risk of suffering certain food-borne diseases. Of course, if you can afford to buy organic vegetables or fruits, you may have less to worry about. But if you have no such options around, how to remove pesticides from your vegetables?

Washing vegetables

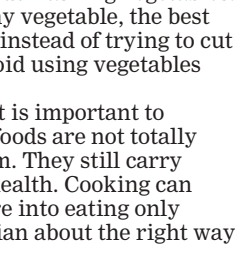
Now, let us know more about washing vegetables. ■ When you see mold on any vegetable, the best thing to do is to throw it away instead of trying to cut the portion where mold is. Avoid using vegetables that gather mold. ■ If you are on a raw diet, it is important to consult a dietitian. Some raw foods are not totally clean even after you wash them. They still carry bacteria and may affect your health. Cooking can solve the problem but if you are into eating only salads, then talk to your dietitian about the right way to treat raw vegetables.



Follow this method:

What you’ll need: Water, lemon juice, soda and apple cider vinegar.

What to do: Simply mix some lemon juice, vinegar and some soda in a bowl of water. Carefully sprinkle this liquid on the veggies or fruits you wish to wash. After 5-7 minutes, wash them in water.



Sinus headache technique

Place your index finger on your cheekbones and put pressure and rotate your fingers in a circular motion for 5 to 10 minutes. In the same way, put your index fingers on your forehead right where your eyebrows begin and rotate your fingers in a circular motion for 5 to 10 minutes. Do this exercise twice a day.

How does this work:

Sinus pain usually occurs around the cheeks and in the forehead and it is difficult to withstand the pain. This Shiatsu massage technique will relieve sinus congestion by stimulating the congested points.

Shiatsu for lower back pain

Reduce Back Pain Technique - Lie on your back, bend your legs so the soles of the feet can touch the floor. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for 4 minutes. Slowly, bring your right knee up, clasp it with both hands and bring it close to your chest. Switch legs and repeat this exercise. This exercise will reduce lower back pain and you will get the best results if performed twice daily.



Stress reduction technique

Put both your hands on your head, placing your fingers on your scalp and your thumbs against your temples. Apply gentle pressure to your temples, rotating your thumbs in a circular motion while breathing deeply for 5 to 10 minutes.

How does this work: This exercise will relieve you from stress headaches and migraine. Do it twice daily.

Japanese shiatsu self massage techniques for pain relief and relaxation

Relaxation technique 1

Hold your right foot in both palms while applying pressure on the sole using both your thumbs.

Relaxation technique 2

Kneel on the floor in such a way that your feet are placed below your buttocks. Reach your hands towards the feet and place one thumb on the midpoint of each sole.

How does this work: Both these techniques relax the nerves in the feet, improves your foot balance and opens the joints which are stiff. You can do both these exercises twice daily.

Energy flow technique 2

Place your hands firmly on your chest. Apply pressure and massage your chest, stroking your fingers up and down for 10 minutes.

How does this work: This therapeutic exercise promotes the flow of therapeutic energy from the chest to the rest of the body in a downward motion. You can do this exercise twice a day.

What is shiatsu?

It is a kind of Japanese bodywork that entails the application of comfortable pressure with fingers to stretch, tap, knead and press specific body points. The pressure of the fingers has a very strong effect on the connective tissues which are just under your skin. These connective tissues create a protective covering over

each joint, blood vessel, muscles, bones and nerves including the spinal cord and brain. Due to poor blood circulation, connective tissues can become congested. If you start doing the Shiatsu self-massage techniques, you will instantly feel rejuvenated and relaxed. Unlike other bodywork techniques, Shiatsu can be easily self-performed with effective results. Here’s a simple guide for beginners.

Energy flow technique 1

Hold your right foot in both palms near the toes and separate each toe using the thumb and index finger of both hands. Starting with the big toe, place both your fingers at the bottom of the toe for support, and massage the top of the toe with both thumbs in an upward manner. Perform this technique on each toe for 5 to 10 times.

NEHA GHOSH

Is there too much stress in your life causing anxiety and lowering your energy? Then, you should try out Japanese Shiatsu self-massage techniques for pain relief and relaxation. These techniques will aid in promoting body relaxation and alleviating pain. So, what is Shiatsu? Let’s find out in this article:



Britney Spears opens up about her single life



Singer Britney Spears got candid about her life as a single woman and said that it is so weird to be single, reports suggests. She took her Instagram handle to write a post where she reflected on life as a single woman. It's so weird being single, Spears wrote in the caption along with the photograph of a nun drinking through a straw from a teacup. I have had a lot of time to really look back with all the good and bad. I have realised I don't talk to myself that nicely at all, added the singer, who released her memoir *The Woman in Me* in October. She continued. I am easily manipulated and I wear my heart on my sleeve but I am definitely changing all that. I have to make time to stop and look around to re-evaluate myself and say is this good for me? I like a routine and I usually do the same thing every day, Spears added.

— ANI



LOVE GOES VIRAL

The *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan* cast and team unveil a thrilling trailer filled with music and festivities



A still from the film

VIJAYALAKSHMI NARAYANAN

The unveiling of the official trailer for the year-end release *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan* in Mumbai added a new dimension to music and festivities. *The Free Press Journal* team joined the lively sundowner event, which featured not only the trailer but also the official presentation of the film's soundtrack.

In attendance at the event were the film's ensemble cast, including Siddhant Chaturvedi, Ananya Pandey, and Adarsh Gourav, along with director Arjun Varain Singh and producers Reema Kagti and Ritesh Sidhwani. Later in the evening, the gathering was graced by the film's musical team, which included music supervisor Ankur Tewari, OAFF, Savera, Lothika, Rashmeet Kaur, Yashraj, Karan Kanchan, Saba Azad, and Achint Thakkar.

Set in the era of social media, *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan* follows the lives of three close friends—Imaad (played by Siddhant), Ahana (played by Ananya), and Neil (played by Adarsh). While they portray ideal lives on social media, the truth behind their facades is far from the picture they paint online.

Held by Arjun, making his debut in the realm of OTT releases, the film will delve into the challenges of millennial dating and explore how an excess of information can have detrimental effects on our everyday interpersonal relationships.

Chiming in with their views on why the film is an important story that needs to be told, Siddhant shares, "*Kho Gaye Hum Kahan* uniquely represents millennials

and Gen Z, echoing their lives lived out both on social media and in the real world."

Ananya adds, "It's a story that needs to be told, a story our generation will wholeheartedly connect with and we couldn't be more proud to have been a part of it."

Adarsh concludes, "The best part is that during filming, we immersed ourselves so deeply in our roles that our on-screen friendship seamlessly transformed into real camaraderie off-camera. We can't wait for Netflix audiences around the world to discover our labour of love."

Expressing his joy of marking his grand directorial debut, Arjun shares, "I wanted to share a story close to my heart, about the people I cherish and grew up with. The twenties mark the most exciting yet daunting chapter of life and navigating through that maze while growing up in the digital age, amidst the chaotic world of social media can be even more overwhelming. *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan* features an incredibly talented cast who brought this story to life with their utmost dedication and belief."

The cast then decided to quiz their creators on their familiarity with Gen Z language, an activity that had the audience in splits. Additionally, they participated in an entertaining Bollywood quiz, with the winners earning the opportunity to take a selfie with the actors. The night came to an end as the music team delighted the audience with the film's soundtrack, featuring a total of six songs.

Kho Gaye Hum Kahan premieres on OTT from December 26, 2023 onwards.

PICS: VARINDER CHAWLA

Mrs. & Mr.

CJ DESK



On December 11, 2023, the newlyweds Randeep Hooda and Lin Laishram hosted a wedding reception in Mumbai for their B-Town friends.

For the wedding reception, Randeep Hooda looked like a dapper in a velvet suit. Lin Laishram stunned in a bright red sequined saree.

Randeep Hooda's ex-girlfriend, actress Neetu Chandra, made an appearance at the wedding reception in a traditional outfit. Randeep Hooda's *Highway* director, Imtiaz Ali, arrived with his daughter, Ida Ali. The Archies actress Tara Sharma and her husband, Roopak Saluja, were also seen in traditional outfits. Maanvi Gargoo arrived in a black saree and paired it with an off-shoulder blouse.



Tara Sharma Saluja with husband



Imtiaz Ali



Neetu Chandra



Maanvi Gargoo

Director's Cut

The Baddie!

Filmmaker tells that he prefers directing films over acting

LIPIKA VARMA

Anurag Kashyap dons multiple hats of being a director/producer/presenter and actor as well and now Kashyap and Nagraj Popatrao Manjule



A still from *Kastoori: The Musk*

teamed up as presenter for *Kastoori: The Musk*, a film by Vinod Kamle. It is a story about two children whose parents are manual scavenging professionals. Anurag is anxiously waiting for his next theatrical release *Kennedy* neo-noir thriller film. The film has been applauded in various International film festivals and screened in *Kolkata International Film Festival*. While talking to *The Free Press Journal*, he shares, "*Kastoori* came to me after it was completed and already made. I just came to know that the film had already received the coveted national award yet hasn't got an opportunity to release yet. Owing to lockdown when big films weren't releasing there wasn't any chance for small film's to release. We were like such a wonderful film why hasn't released yet."

"We took it on us Ranjan Singh my producer of my film *Kennedy* watched the film and then we showed it to Nagraj who then took it to multiplex. All of us came together and now it's set to release. This film is set in the community of manual scavengers, those who are clean our gutters. So when their children go to school people feel that stinking smell of gutters is exhaling from their bodies. They are treated as untouchables. *Kastoori* has that wonderful smell and so these people are looking for *Kastoori* so that the others may not mistreat them." he adds on being a presenter.

Anurag agrees that small time filmmakers need muscle power to release films in theatres. As big producers take away theatres easily, "That fight is already there and shall always continue to exist. We are in country where only 1000 films

are made in one year and there are only 12000 cinema halls in our country. We can't do anything about it," he tells.

Finding a solution so small films also get enough theatres for releasing their films, "I think there is only one solution if we start making many more cinema halls in comparison to the films that are set to release in one year terms. China has around than around 10 lakhs cinema halls. We need space. Our films work mostly on word of mouth publicity thus for our films getting space plays a pivotal role," he further explains.

Not many know that Anurag will be seen as a villain down south. "Yes, I play a villain in this South film titled *Maharaja*."

I have acted with Vijay Sethupathi and is directed by Nithilan Swaminathan. My priority is making my own films. I go there as an actor. I like to follow the Captain of the ship so I behave like an obedient student," he signs off.



PICS: VARINDER CHAWLA

CAUGHT ON CAM

Celebs graced the red carpet of 23rd ITA Awards



Arjun Bijlani



Shriya Pilgaokar



Vishal Jethwa



Director Rohit Shetty



Jeetendra



Anushka Ranjan and Aditya Seal



Madhurima Tuli



Tejasswi Prakash



Shubhangi Atre

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